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THEY WHO QUESTION



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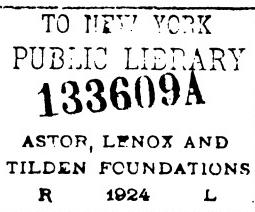
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“They who question shall reign.”

From the “Unrecorded Sayings of Christ.”

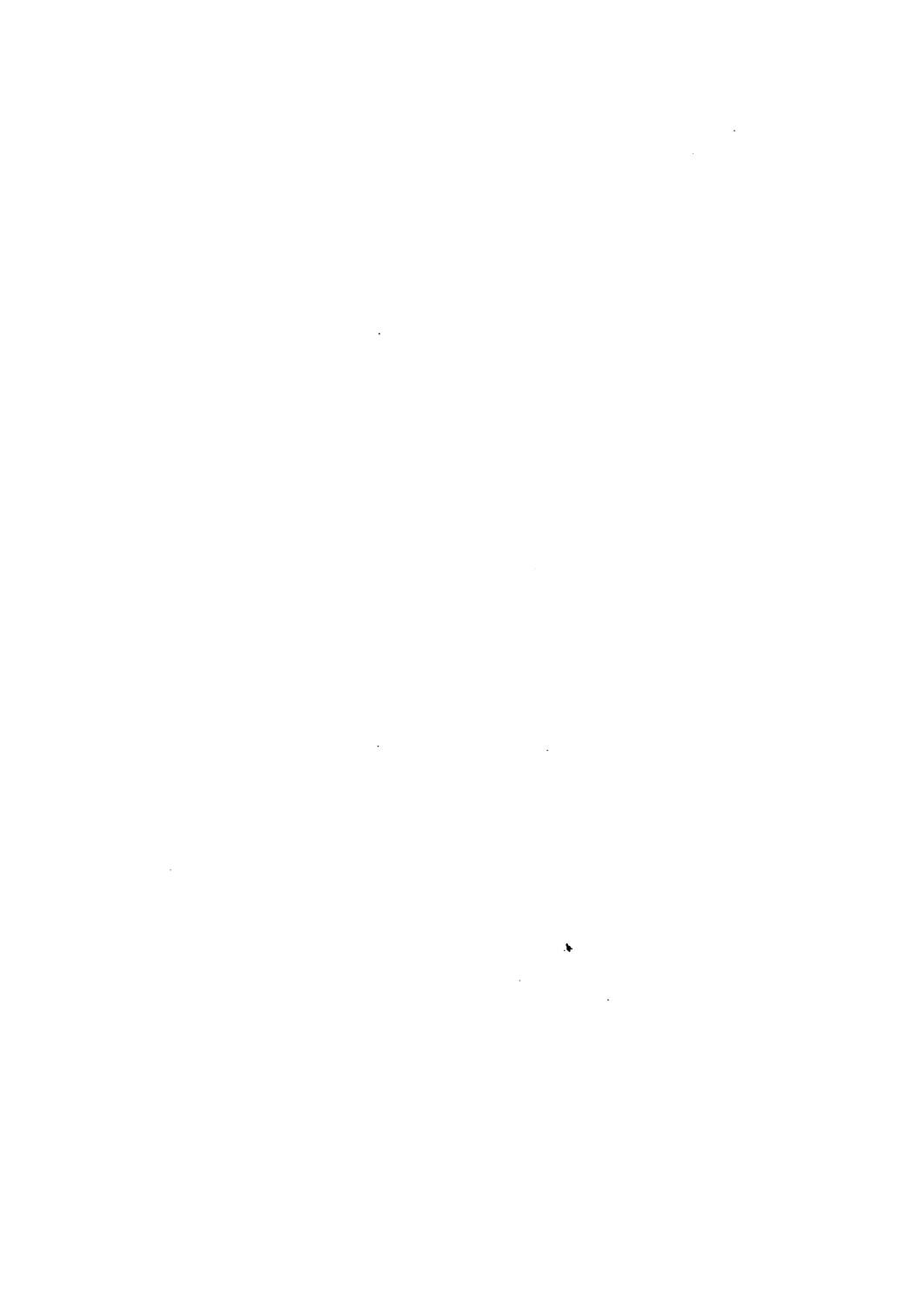
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PART I

CHAPTER I

A SPRING morning, and a little girl with the spring-time in her face and in her dancing step, the soft wind blowing her yellow hair up from her shoulders, and the blue of the far-away sky in her eyes.

"Miss Fletcher!" The governess, old, staid, and grey, walked in front of the joyous little figure in the green lane, with its broken shadows, its primroses, and violets and nesting birds. "Miss Fletcher, don't you think the world is really too beautiful?"

"It looks so to young eyes," said the governess.

"Oh, it hasn't got anything to do with my eyes!" laughed the child. "Don't you think it's perfect, Miss Fletcher? And don't you love to lie on your back in the grass and look up to the sky and wonder where it ends, and just think and think? Don't you love the trees when they are bursting into leaf like this, and you can see all the little bare black branches and twigs, and the long buds bursting from them on the big horse-chestnut? In the autumn, you

know, its arms hung down straight and sad; but now they have lifted them up to the sky, and each of them holds out a tiny lamp, like the virgins in the Bible who waited for the Bridegroom, and who kept a little flame burning all through the night."

"God made the world," said the governess piously, "and He made all things good."

"I suppose it is because everything is so beautiful that we know He made it?" asked the child. "Is that how people know that God made the world, Miss Fletcher?" She stretched out her childish arms with a gesture which seemed to embrace all living things. "I love it so!" she cried in a sort of joyous ecstasy, and she lifted her face up to the sky, "I love it so! It is so beautiful you cannot wonder that God was pleased with it all after He made it, can you?"

"I also was young once," thought the governess with the grey hair; and she would have kissed the child who had awakened in some dim and drowsy way some thought of hers which had slept these many years, but, being a governess, and old and grey, she repressed the impulse. That was what life had made her—old and grey and self-contained. She repressed the impulse towards bestowing a caress, and took out her watch and said, "We ought not to be wasting time, I am afraid; let us begin our botany lesson."

"No, no, not to-day!" cried Enid. "You pick the flowers, dear Miss Fletcher, at your botany lesson, and you pull them to pieces and throw them away.

Do let them live and be happy, just for to-day! The daisies are quite warm under the sun, and some of them have a pink edge as if they had kissed each other. There are some veronicas under the hedge which look at you with blue eyes, and the lilies-of-the-valley have put on their confirmation dresses because to-morrow is Easter Sunday."

"Dear child, you are a little imaginative!"

"There is the hollow in the wood where I went yesterday; it is so blue with hyacinths that it looks as though a little bit of the sky had come down to rest in it, and when the wind blows the hyacinths all ring little bells. Primroses never speak to me; do they speak to you, Miss Fletcher? I know what the other flowers are saying, but primroses are shy, I think. Once, long ago, they were much more friendly. Perhaps they feel more shy of me as I get older, for primroses are always young. But the wild flowers in the wood are full of stories, and they and the daffodils are always dancing; and I had much rather hear what the flowers tell me themselves than have a botany lesson. Please let me off one to-day?"

The governess yielded with an uncomfortable sense of leaving a duty unfulfilled. She was so much accustomed to do as she ought—poor Miss Fletcher—that it had become second nature to her, almost a form of self-indulgence, and nothing really disturbed her temper except being thwarted in the fulfillment of her most distasteful tasks. She sighed and walked on, and the little girl danced

along the green lane, now in front of her companion, now behind her ; her yellow hair was turned to gold in the sunshine, and her feet made light hops and skips in time to some joyous little ballad that she sang. All nature was in accord with her. The wet violets in the hedges were her friends, the shy mothering birds sitting on their eggs were not afraid of her, the very insects were this child's companions, and the hazels laughed as they flung down silver catkins on her ; the flowers sprang stately on their stems after her feet had pressed them, the stream sang songs to her, and babbled round her ankles as she splashed amongst its shallows ; the very sky was made for her, and the little clouds that came and went upon it were her brothers and sisters. The lark did not soar so high that she could not hear his song—such courtesy from a brother lark ! And the robin whistled “still friends” though the hard days of winter had passed.

Everything was good ; everything was kindly and tender and loving ! It was a joy to stroke the catkins in their coats of silver-grey, or to touch the little downy birds in their nests, or to lie with longing arms outstretched on the tender mosses of the roots of old trees. But best of all, perhaps, it was just to let the warm sunshine smile down, and the blue sky spread itself as a canopy above, while miracle was understood without even a sense of wonder, and good was the only natural law.

Nature, the kind old nurse, had taken the child upon her knee, and had told her strange, beautiful

stories and caressed her ever since she was born, and her heart overflowed with content as she danced along the wet green lane, with its singing birds and broken sunshine. The world belonged to her, and it was a blessed inheritance.

It happened that a little brown rabbit was also out for an airing on this gay spring morning, and a neighbour of his, a sharp-nosed weasel, with a long lithe body and green eyes, was walking also. They met, and the weasel, being hungry, or from some sporting instinct, sprang upon the rabbit and began to kill it after the not very sporting manner of weasels, attacking its soft prey from behind, and fastening itself upon the rabbit's back.

And this is what the child in the lane saw: a struggling, helpless mass of brown fur, all dabbled with blood, poor kicking white heels disturbing the tender moss underfoot, a pair of eager, cruel, gleaming eyes, and a greedy mouth fastened on its prey.

She stood still. The feminine mind is perhaps too prone to feel for the pains of others; its imagination is over-keen, and the vicarious sufferings of a child or a woman are no doubt useless, extravagant, and illogical. This child dancing along the lane stood still and trembled, her cheeks grew white, and she felt sick, horrified, and suddenly cold. With the horror there was mingled a sense of evil, as though she had surprised some wickedness, something quite vilely lower than herself, with which it was an insult to be brought into contact.

"It's disgusting!" she cried, "hideous! hideous!"

She put up her hands to cover her eyes, and sobbed in a sort of confused rage. "Miss Fletcher, Miss Fletcher, it's killing it! Ah, the brute! It's killing the rabbit!"

"Come away, my child, come away," said the governess testily. "I hate to see these things myself; they are horribly disagreeable, and the sight of blood makes me sick."

"But it is not even dead!" screamed the child.

"I really must insist upon your walking on, Enid. I wish we could see a keeper, or some one whom we could ask to kill the poor thing." Miss Fletcher took the child by the arm and was dragging her away, but the slender figure tore herself free.

"Walk on," she said, and her voice might have belonged to a woman martyr. She took a heavy stick with hands from which all the blood seemed to have ebbed away; her face was white and set in lines unconsciously noble; pity had swept away horror, and with pity had come the necessity for doing.

The first blow killed the rabbit outright, and the child sat down by the roadside and burst into a torrent of weeping.

"I killed it!" she cried, "I killed it!" looking down at her little blood-stained hands, while she shook with sobs. "I never killed anything before, but it was suffering so! It couldn't want to live when it was in such pain. . . . Why does God let weasels live? . . . Oh, it was such a perfect morning and everything was so happy, why couldn't the

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rabbit be allowed to be happy too? It was not doing any harm!"

The old governess sat down beside her on the grass, soothed and petted her, put kindly old arms about her, and begged her to cease from weeping.

The distress was inconsolable. "If it had only killed it outright, Miss Fletcher! But it was so cruel!"

"Hush, dear, hush! Don't think about it any more!"

"But, Miss Fletcher, what made the weasel so cruel? Who invented pain? If God made everything, why did He teach the weasel the very cruellest, horridest way of killing a rabbit!"

"I don't know, my dear; I suppose all animals are cruel."

"But why—*why*, Miss Fletcher? You said God made everything!"

"We kill and eat things ourselves," said the governess helplessly. "Look at the pheasants and—"

"Ah, but we—I mean the shooters—kill them outright. Mullens says he can't bear when the gentlemen shoot badly and wound the birds; he always kills them at once when he finds them. But God teaches animals to kill each other so slowly!"

Then the governess spoke suddenly, for the first time for many years not in a pattern. "It is a very refinement of cruelty!" she exclaimed. "Nature can teach us tortures such as the Inquisition could hardly invent. It's all one law—the cat prolonging the misery of the feeble mouse, the eagle swooping

down from the sky to tear with ravenous beak and claws the living lamb, the very blackbirds on the lawn devouring the writhing worm! And these animals are not only maintaining their own lives at the expense of others, they are maintaining it by an instinct which we dare not inquire into, by a slow and cruel mode of torture. Unmerited sacrifice of life, unmerited suffering," said the governess harshly. She no longer had her arms about the child, but was looking straight ahead of her across the fields and the wood; the sun was hidden behind a cloud, and the spring morning felt chilly and cold. Fear had dried Enid's tears as she looked with big round eyes at her governess, so old and grey, speaking in this strange way. "And life is not sacrificed willingly," went on Miss Fletcher, "nor with intelligence, nor is it sacrificed for the benefit of some higher life. So that the worm does not say, 'Take my poor life that it may nourish your better, or more beautiful, or more useful life.' No, the beautiful and useful in nature are more often sacrificed to the ugly, the ravenous, and the merely greedy."

The child's eyes grew wider, and her lips parted. "Animal life is all that these creatures possess. No one imagines that the worm, the lamb, or the mouse are earning a martyr's crown or a happy eternity by being tortured and killed." She caught sight of the child's face, and broke off suddenly. "We must go home," she said sharply. And the little girl rose obediently and followed her.

"I think God is very cruel," she said.

CHAPTER II

GIRLHOOD is a gentle time; it is a lull between the storms of childhood and the tragedy of maturity.

The eager questionings, the hopeless problems, the frank scepticism and the rebelliousness of childhood are over, and have given place to a guileless faith. Noble resolves are being formed; a divine belief in all things is the portion of a girl. No questionings have been answered, no difficulties have been removed, but girlhood is a time of sublimest trust. "I believe"—blessed words—have taken the place of "I want to know" which beset the stormy childish days. "God is good" has triumphed, because I am a girl and consciously happy; "God is cruel" is forgotten because the eager, passionate heart of the child, who knows its own helplessness, has given place to the divine trust of the woman, who says, "I believe, and I will help to make things better."

It is a beautiful faith, a lovely soul's awakening. Those who look on say, without envy, "Let her dream a little; let her be happy."

"Good-bye," said Enid; "I shall walk home."

"Good-bye, my love. A drive would do you far more good; there is not even a Service, is there?"

"No; I shall not stay long. Good-bye."

The carriage drove away, and as it did so Mrs. Malincourt sighed, as those sigh who believe that on the whole this world is a very fairly comfortable one, and that martyrs and saints are inconvenient and disturbing persons in it. Mrs. Malincourt loved her niece whole-heartedly, and she believed that it was because she loved her that she sighed. Saints are not made for everyday wear, and the solid earth is by far the safest path to tread. She sighed because her niece's feet never seemed suitably shod for an earthly pilgrimage—and yet, and yet! How pathetic it is to see people try to travel on clouds before they have wings!

It was late afternoon as Enid pushed open the heavy iron-bound doors and entered the cathedral, and the westering sun had stretched out long shadows on the hills, and filled the building with soft prismatic rays; the wide level pavement of the nave was coloured with pools of light, crimson and violet and green. The solemn arches spoke of holiness and ages of peace. Stately and quiet the patient columns stood, as they had stood these many hundred years, calm, conscious of strength, willing to stand and wait. And overhead the loving arches knit themselves together with their upraised arms, meeting and kissing one another with the love that was born of the strength from which they sprang. Higher still were the clerestory and the dim nuns' walk. And over all brooded the exquisite, restful span of the carved roof. It was a vast and beautiful

building, full of prayer and of peace and of holiness—prayers of the living, prayers of the dead, all here in a thrilling eternity of vibration, and making an atmosphere of perfect sanctity. Here, for long and long, all silent now but remaining for ever, had echoed the voices of men who had praised God or had told Him of their needs. All other sounds had been hushed to soft whispers in this old church. No man had even greeted his fellow, save in the whisper that proclaims, "Behold, a Greater than I is here." No lover had wooed his mistress in these aisles except in the low words and mute caresses that said, "This love, even, is God's also." The tender mother, as she kissed her babe beside the grey font, gave it to that Someone better and stronger than herself, whom she scarcely knew, but to whom her darling rightly belonged. The place was filled with God.

The girl who walked along the many-coloured pavement of the old nave was in harmony with the place and with its memories; her soft light step had no need of awkward tiptoeing to hush its gentle tread, and the long clinging white skirts made no rustle to disturb its quiet. She entered as a spirit might have entered—the spirit of one of those gentle high-born ladies who slept so quietly underneath the stones. Serene, beautiful, quiet, the stately girl's figure moved along up the nave. A black-robed official of the cathedral passed her at the door with a courteous gesture and went out. She was quite alone in the great cathedral, and the sunlight

of God and the peace which is from everlasting to everlasting enfolded her like some living thing.

She passed through the carved screen of the choir, floating onwards in the many-coloured sunlight, and placed some lilies in the gilded vases on the altar. One by one the flowers were arranged in the burnished cups, and when her task was finished Enid turned to some chairs, and, kneeling down, began to pray.

A living spirit hers, warm and beautiful amongst the blessed, the forgotten dead; and as she prayed the old stones seemed indeed the very walls of the kingdom of God. They must have known, those dead and gone old builders, when they reared their beautiful churches, that every line of them was a path to the throne of the Highest. How else did they discover the peace that they have built into these stones, or the spirit that springs upwards? Who taught them to set the massive corner-stones that preach reliance, and the columns that are patience, the loving arches and the walls that are safety and peace? Surely when this old church is level with the dust, and even the God whom we know is here known no more, some earth-child, wandering among grassy aisles and a few scattered stones, may feel a solemn peace steal over him, and the voices of the generations who are to come, believers or unbelievers—God knows—may be hushed here, they know not why, awed by a Presence they know not what.

And if prayer indeed hallows, then surely the

place where this girl knelt was holy ground. To her, prayer was an ecstasy, it prevailed upon herself like the power of a mighty force. Often it exhausted her, and the spirit, yearning upwards with a tension that seemed to separate it from the body, yet felt the body tired. She heard nothing while she prayed, time was forgotten, her soul spoke face to face with God, and the rest of the day was often a dreamy recollection of a wonderful experience.

To-day she prayed, as a girl prays, for deliverance from evil which she feels can never touch her, for exemption from sorrows which can never be hers. Surely such supplications she may indeed make, nothing doubting—her own nature would have to be doubted first.

And then the greater mystery of heavenly communion, with its presumption, its perfect reasonableness, swayed her with an uncontrollable force, and stretching out her hands in an abandonment of supplication, she cried: "Lord, reveal Thyself to me! Teach me more! Give me a closer communion with Thee! Keep me from everything earthly, make me pure even as Thou art pure, loving as Thou art loving, tender and compassionate." She bowed her head on her hands.

The cathedral clock boomed forth five solemn strokes, the black-robed official came in and went out again. Enid did not hear either his footsteps or the solemn strokes of the clock. On her bowed head the sunshine and the love of God seemed to brood, and her bursting soul was filled with the rap-

ture of her experience. Suddenly she raised her head, and the sunlight smote full in her face, and lit her eyes, and glowed through her until her heart's emotion vibrated into sound and speech.

"Oh my Saviour," she said aloud, "I cannot love Thee better than I do; all the love of my heart is Thine!" Then, with the impatient twitching at the veil which divides the human from the divine, she lifted up her arms and stretched them forth, and cried, "Oh my Lord, whether it be in life or in death, only let me see Thee—let me see Thee face to face!"

And high up in the roof a living face of great beauty, with a short brown beard and finely-cut features, sad but benign, with compassionate eyes, looked down upon her. She held her breath. Was this death, and had her prayer been answered? Was it a vision in the body or out of the body? Was it a question of moments or of years that eye met eye and soul rushed to soul? This silence of fearful mystery, this trembling ecstasy, was it of time or of eternity? . . .

A sharp cry broke the penetrating silence, a shrill, vibrating sound like the sharp impact of metal upon some crystal globe, and she started to her feet as a sleeper starts in some sudden dreadful awakening. With hands pressed to her heart and her breath coming in short quick sobs, she stood gazing at the figure of a golden angel that had fallen from the roof, and had splintered into a thousand pieces at her feet. And while still bewildered, quivering with

past rapture and shaken with fear, a man's voice spoke to her, and the beautiful face that she had taken to be that of her Saviour was close beside her.

"I fear you are much startled," he said.

She nodded mutely. A longing to get back to the open air, to be amongst familiar trivial things, seized upon her, and she took up her book of devotions and fastened the silver clasps in fervent, eager haste. Then she would have sped away out into the green fields or to the simple homely town, would have sped away to something altogether human, tangible, ordinary; but the eyes that had in them something of the compassion of the Saviour stayed her for a moment, and the voice spoke again.

"I am doing some carving up there in the roof, and this figure, which was not very securely placed, fell at my touch."

"It is quite broken, isn't it?" she said regretfully, looking at the headless angel with the shattered golden wings and the broken harp.

"Yes, it is quite broken. Are you very much grieved?"

"It has praised God up there in the niche for so long," she said regretfully.

"I am so sorry," said the gentle voice, "so sorry I have broken your angel."

"You could not help it," she answered. "Do not grieve about it."

"I could not help it," he repeated, "but still I am very sorry." And with that the vision of maiden-

hood passed out of the church and the place was empty.

He checked the impulse to ask the name of the lady from the verger at the door; she must remain unnamed, he thought, with the poetical fancy which belongs to artists. He wondered how Dante had learned the name of Beatrice, wishing fastidiously that the name had been a fictitious one, and hoping that the poet had never inquired who it was that after a single brief glance of her as she walked through the streets of Florence had become to him forever the one woman—womanhood made perfect by the spirit which loved and comprehended it.

And thereafter, on every spring afternoon in the cathedral at vesper time, he far up in the roof amongst the gilded angels and giant fruit and flowers, where the organ's music was wafted to him as on wings, she in a carved stall praying with bended head, the poet's dream of a distant and an eternal worship of one woman of which the Florentine sang, appeared to him as the most spiritual as well as the deepest of human emotions. If only for once the deep clear eyes might be lifted to him again! But never in all the days that followed did she lift her face of rapture to the roof above her, with its golden angels and robed apostles, and that one living face among the enduring lifelessness of those others of wood and stone. Always the broad hat shaded the gentle brow, the eyes with their look of ecstasy remained uplifted; and he flung his tools aside, leaning full length upon the scaffolding and

looking down as though to draw upwards by the power of his will that heavenly face, to try to surprise for one instant the fleeting, exquisite wonder of a soul unveiled. But the head remained bowed in its lowly attitude, the two slender white hands covered her eyes, and the artist within him rebelled at the exclusion. He could carve an angel's face, he knew, if he could see hers again! Why not, then, descend into the church and sit in the stalls near her when she came to pray in the dove-like quiet of the early spring twilight? But the intrusiveness of the thought was put aside with a feeling of disgust. No, she must look up to him here with the sunlight on her face, as on the first afternoon, and with the same look of rapture in her eyes.

It was a poet's dream! the dream of a man too much alone, who had put love, except the abstract love of the beautiful, forever—or so he imagined—from his mind. Art alone was satisfying, and a goddess fit to worship. The world was made of but common clay, and the potter's wheel was incapable of the manufacture of any very heroic figures. Some people, it was true, shut their eyes and worshipped tiny gods, and called them fair or fine or holy; but Philip Gurney carved his own images, grasping where he could the fleeting visions of perfect beauty which came to him, with an ideal always just beyond his reach.

The next picture of the girl was set in a lowly background, and my lady who prays sat in a poor hovel in one of the back streets of the town. . . .

In an old court, once the house of some noble, he had seen some quaint stone carvings of which he wished to make a drawing. Here, in humble fashion, a tiny baby on her knee, but with a certain golden presence making all things radiant, he saw her for whom the stately cathedral had ever seemed her especial place. The poor people about the court had much to tell of her, as he sat and sketched, talking volubly but with appealing sincerity of her goodness. The garrulousness of the uneducated found subject-matter for conversation in every tiny action of hers, and they mingled their appreciation of her beauty with a simple satisfaction in her generosity and her gifts. She was an angel, and wealthy beyond what poor folk dreamed of.

"Why, yes, he might surely make a picture of the queer heads," said the woman upon whose door the stone heads were carved. It seemed a strange thing of which to make a picture, but artists were not like other people. So he sat and sketched, while ragged children peeped curiously at the growing picture, until the door was opened in the humble room where she sat, and he saw her sitting in a broken chair by an empty hearth. The baby crowded in her arms, its tiny wrinkled fingers playing with the chain about her neck. In a moment some sudden, unexplained childish fear overcame it, and the little brow was puckered into quick alarm. The girl in whose arms it lay gathered it to her, hid the troubled face on her shoulder, and paced the narrow confines of the room, murmuring soft words of re-

assurance and comfort to the little fluttered creature.

Then he rose to go, and turning homewards he took his colours out again and tried to make from memory a sketch of the girl's attitude, the arms half revealed under the lace of her sleeves clasping their tiny burden—the miserable baby and the tender face above it. He tore his sketch up ere it was half done, and, ashamed that his pencil could do a picture such scant justice, he threw the torn page impatiently away. Then some half-forgotten lines suggested themselves to him, and he seized them before they could escape his mind, and wrote on the empty page of his sketch-book: "Fairer than Rachel by the palmy well, fairer than Ruth among the fields of corn, fairer than the angel who said 'All hail' she seemed, who entering filled the house with sudden light."

CHAPTER III

THE carving was finished, but the Dean of the cathedral town prayed his guest to stay on a little longer, in order that he might see something of the neighbourhood.

"You have worked so hard," said the old man, "that I do not feel as though we had had time to do the honours of the place for you yet, and you would like, would you not, to see the old Manor House with its curious panellings, which you thought might suit you for the summer?"

"I am afraid I was thinking more of the fishing than of the panels," said Philip, "when I spoke of coming to the old place for the summer, but I recollect your saying something about some Early English work there, and it would give me great pleasure to see it."

"And we must show you Malincourt," said the Dean, "one of the most beautiful places in the county, and with rather a curious ecclesiastical history attached to it. I think it may interest you to hear it. But before I begin it," he said, rising from the dinner-table, where they sat, "we must seek more comfortable chairs in the drawing-room. The library is forbidden ground to me in the evening; I read far too late into the night if I get

amongst my books, and as I cannot possibly resist reading when I am amongst them, I always come in here and enjoy my roses and my garden, and go to bed at a reasonable hour."

He led the way into a low, wide drawing-room furnished with flowered chintzes and hangings, rich in easy-chairs, and with a deep, wide window-seat with cushions upon it; the walls were hung with water-colours and old china plates, and a carpet like soft moss covered the floor. It was a room more like a woman's than that of an elderly Dean, famous for his erudition and learning, and somewhat feared by reason of his habit of unfettered thought —a pleasant room with windows opening on to the garden, and all about it, on tables and mantelshelf and cabinet-top, were vases and bowls of roses. Here were blushing pink La France and there golden William Allan Richardsons, and drooping delicate Niphетос, "roses, roses everywhere," of every hue and of every curious name, their delicate fragrance scenting the whole room. The windows, draped softly with muslin curtains and rendered luxurious by cushioned window-seats, were wide open to the shadowy garden, where the thrushes and blackbirds were making a chorus of evensong.

"This is the time of day," said the Dean, "when I try to forget that I am a wrinkled old Dean with bad eyesight and far more years behind me than in front of me, and I play at being a fine lady with nothing but my roses to think about." He seated himself in an unluxurious fashion in a very luxuri-

ous chair, saying, "Now that we have our flowers and cushioned seats, I shall not feel that I am so much to blame if I hold you with the history of the Malincourts of which I am about to speak. The family of Malincourt, you understand, is our tribal deity, and during the almost countless generations that they have lived here I do not believe that their sovereignty has ever been called in question. Our local ladies set their fashions by them as nearly as they possibly can, although every one feels that there is something unique about both the place and its inhabitants which is incapable of imitation or reproduction. 'It is done at Malincourt' is considered a conclusive argument in all social concerns; but I believe that in the matter of dress or personal taste the present owner of the place is so far above popular fashion that her dresses are held to be in some sort like the robes of righteousness, which only a few are worthy to wear!"

"A woman with an inimitable gown is in a strong position," laughed Philip.

"In the old days the Malincourts, in their undisputed character of local deities, were responsible as much for the morals as for the fashions of the place. Their word was in every sense law, and their standard of ethics was as closely as possible followed by the squires and gentry round about. A bad Malincourt, like a bad king, made society evil for the time; but when a good Malincourt reigned, morals were reformed, and evil deeds, robbery, and violence were almost at a discount. Even now, the

form of religion of the household and of very many of the tenants is influenced by rather a curious accidental circumstance in history. There is a chapel adjoining the house which was passed over unnoticed at the time of the Reformation, and never came under the rule of the Reformed Church. Personally, I believe it might still be claimed by the Roman Catholics, but as a matter of fact the house itself now almost surrounds it, and it is the exclusive property of the Malincourts. In this private chapel, as I suppose one must call it, the form of service is determined by the owner in exactly the same way as you or I would determine the mode of reading family prayers in our own libraries. The present proprietor—this Miss Malincourt whom I mentioned just now—is a girl of eighteen. By the by, I wonder if you have ever seen her in the cathedral when you have been carving? She is often there in the afternoon. Miss Malincourt has shown a great deal of good sense in the matter, combined with artistic instinct and an appreciation of the condition of affairs which does her great credit. But then, you know, my dear Sir Philip, in this neighbourhood we are all inclined to think that everything which Miss Malincourt does redounds to her credit. It is part of the creed of the old town to bestow a considerable amount of worship on the girl who owns the greater part of it."

"I think," said Sir Philip slowly, "that I must leave the house and the beautiful lady unvisited; I believe I have seen her, and that I spoke to her once

in the cathedral on the afternoon that the angel with the golden trumpet fell."

"Ah! I recollect," said the Dean. "You say the figure is quite beyond repair?"

"It is hopelessly broken," said Sir Philip, "and as it would hardly do to try to reproduce it, I should advise your having quite a different figure in the niche. Patching is quite useless."

The Dean's mouth puckered oddly at the corners. "Revolution rather than reformation again," he said drily, referring to a conversation of a few nights ago which he had had with his guest, when Sir Philip had pleaded for the total destruction of what was ugly or damaged, while the Dean had stood out for reformation and repair.

"Undoubtedly," said Sir Philip quickly; "I detest compromise."

"Compromise is often wise," said the old man, with a keen look at the young man to see what his answer would be.

"But it is never great," amended Philip.

"Yet most of our idols have feet of clay," said the Dean, in the tone which seeks to prove what a man is thinking of. "What then?"

"Mine is a ruthless doctrine, you will think," said Sir Philip; and, fearing that he was speaking harshly, he made a counter-movement of tenderness towards the old Dean and laid his hand for a moment on his arm, "yet I would destroy the faulty god. Perhaps there is somewhere an idol which is

all pure gold, and if not, then I will do without one.
After all, idols are a luxury."

"But a God is a necessity," said the Dean.

"A God without feet of clay," returned Philip.
"Well, I have not found Him yet!"

"You rear very beautiful temples to someone!" said the Dean with a smile, alluding to his guest's gift of carving, and more particularly to the massive doors in a neighbouring Saxon church lately beautified by him with some of his finest work. "It often seems to me," he went on, "as I look at the figures in the upper panels of the doors, that they not only live, but that in their attitude and the exquisite form of the carving their very spirit breathes from them, and it is a matter of great interest to me to wonder how far a man may put his own soul, his very spirit, into these inanimate things. An artist friend of mine tells me that a student will put some sort of likeness to his own features into a sketch, however different the subject may be from himself. What he said illustrates my meaning much better than I could illustrate it myself, and it shows, I think, that when—to use a common expression—a man puts his whole soul into his work, some part of that soul is actually transferred to his creation."

"I hardly think you can reconcile that theory," said Sir Philip, "with the fact that the worst men have often done the most beautiful work."

"There I do not agree with you," said the old man; "there is always just the right thing wanting in such work. I believe Ruskin has taught us this,

if he has taught us nothing else, to admire the soul of a picture or a carving rather than clever brush-work, or even classic form. And it seems to me that it is not always the cleverest painter or designer who should be chosen to execute the work on our church windows or on its stonework, but the man to whom inspiration is not merely genius, but whose art is sacred in the highest sense of the word."

The door opened, wafting the white curtains up from the window where the Dean and his guest were sitting, and a manservant entered with coffee. The interruption did not seem to bring the conversation to an end; the Dean stirred his cup thoughtfully, looking out on to his beloved rose-garden, while his fine keen face was full of thought. Sir Philip had turned, and was leaning back on the cushions of the window-seat; his eyes left looking at the roses and shaded lawns and the blackbirds and thrushes in the garden, and fixed themselves on the Dean. The man who had brought in the coffee went out again, closing the door behind him.

"I think I told you," Sir Philip said slowly, with his eyes turned squarely on the Dean's meditative face, "before I undertook to do the carving in your cathedral, that I am an unbeliever, a sceptic—an atheist, I suppose you would call me."

"And I, my dear fellow," said the Dean quickly, "am saying that there is no such creature on God's earth as an atheist, was quite willing—more than willing, profoundly grateful—that you should

undertake the work, which is a magnificent gift to our church.

A certain tension in the young man's figure gave way, and he settled himself more luxuriously in the window-seat, flicking the ashes from his cigarette with his finger, and smiling slightly. "The work may be good, Mr. Dean—I believe it is—but we were talking of spirit, you know. Now the spirit and the sacredness—call it what you will—in my work, are put there entirely by yourself; it does not belong to my work but to your eyes, or to your far too indulgent mind, 'till God's aglow to loving eyes in what was mere wood before.'" He was still smiling, and the Dean paused for a moment before framing his reply.

"Which of us really knows what he is made of?" he said. "We call ourselves hard names—atheists, unbelievers, materialists; or selfish, vain, and cruel. And then we bring forth our work, and lo, it is beautiful! And we harshly tell ourselves that the motive power in it must be different from that which we find working in ourselves—that is, in our own characters and lives. But hear what comfortable words our Saviour said: 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit, neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. By their fruits ye shall know them.'"

Philip rose impulsively from his seat and linked his arm in that of the Dean. The two had grown to be fast friends during the past weeks when the

carvings were being made, and they passed out now into the garden together, with a feeling between them of something very friendly and intimate.

"I wish one could believe," said Philip, in his level voice, charmingly refined and distinct, "that the good workman is the good man. Yet a Hebrew prophet put the idea before us very poetically in the words you have just quoted, and modern thought, in its heterodox aspects even, would fain come to the same conclusion; but alas, experience has a very different tale to tell!"

"The prevailing mistake to my mind," said the Dean, "in all modern thought is its multiplication of laws. There is a law for genius which is outside the man himself, a law of matter and a law of the spirit, laws of nature, laws of ethics, laws of society. But when one is old it is part of the peacefulness of old age to realise that there is but one law, one truth."

The blackbirds had finished their song, twilight was over, and darkness fell; one or two stars hung in the heavens as though suspended by some invisible chain, as the two men paced up and down; the crunching of the small gravel underneath their feet was the only sound heard except the whispering of the night about them.

"And that one truth," said the Dean, after a pause which the younger man scrupled to break, "that one truth is all truth. 'There is nothing that is true that can possibly be at variance with something else that is true.' Sometimes," said the Dean,

"I am disposed to thank God for old age, because it has taught me something of what harmony and of what the divine law mean."

"And to me," said Sir Philip, "there is no evidence of the divine in law at all. The idea of the beneficence of the Creator is as unproved as it is poetical, and the belief in a Father loving us and grieving for us is a creed which I have often envied men without seeing any reason for accepting it. The sorrow and the pain of the world are surely greater than its joys, and that which our common humanity would cause us to put an end to at once is allowed for all ages by the Being whom we are taught to think the most kind."

"Personal experience—" began the Dean.

"Personal experience," said Sir Philip, "proves nothing."

"Personal experiences in the aggregate are pretty strong evidence," said the Dean, smiling in the dark.

"Granted, if they are the experiences and the conclusions of logical minds, but for the most part such experiences and such conclusions are based upon the teachings of an Oriental volume of essays and histories, not very old as the age of the world goes, and badly edited, although on the whole they are moral in tendency, it is an absurdity to say that they have logically proved that God is good. The conclusions therein carry no weight of evidence with them."

"We are at the transition period," said the Dean, "between using the Bible as a fetish, even to the

extent of exorcising devils with it, and regarding it with a sort of reasoned thankfulness as so much good writing, so much excellent if mistranslated poetry, that has come down to us."

"The Bible is interesting as a history of progressive morality," answered Sir Philip quickly, "but it cannot be accepted as the final dictum of ethics."

The roses shone with a dim radiance in the star-light, and the leaves of a giant sycamore tree stirred restlessly overhead. The black cedar on the lawn spread out soft dark arms in the pale glow of light. The geraniums in the flower-beds had almost lost their colour, but the glow-worms in the path were holding revel and had lit their lamps. Some downy clouds floated across the new moon, and the far-distant milky way, with its July wonder and colour, brooded like a mystery over the still earth. The prevailing beauty and the hush of the night were in striking contrast to argument and sharply defined conclusions. Its mysteriousness was suggestive of the widest possible beliefs, of superstitions even. Yet the presence of the fragile-looking Dean of Malincourt seemed to be a protest against the painfulness of contradiction. Why hurt this old man? He was too old to convince, too old to be shaken by argument. "Leave thou thy sister as she prays," says the poet, and no doubt the advice was worthy of acceptance, even if she and all the tender, praying sweet souls of this earth should address their supplications to an unknown force or

to a false god. Superstition was regrettable, but not to be taken too seriously, and Philip Gurney's innate good taste hardly prompted him to refute the arguments of a professed believer. His mind, as a rule, was ready enough for controversies, but the stooping figure beside him seemed a protest against sharp attack or war of intellects. Briefly, Christianity suited the Dean of Malincourt; it accorded harmoniously with peaceful old age and a pleasant garden. Argument lost half its savour in the presence of dim eyes and feeble steps. No iron negations were possible, and Philip had half begun to turn the conversation away altogether from criticism, when he was interrupted by the Dean, who said, in a tone of half-whimsical amusement, half of regret, "They call me, you know, the unorthodox Dean, and I believe the first great heterodoxy in which I was detected was when I said—and I have said it ever since with the obstinacy of an old man—that suffering was not sent us either by God or the devil."

"The discoveries of Bacteriology have altered the whole problem of pain," said Philip. "Who would think of a microbe seizing upon a man, as a policeman seizes upon him, because he had sinned!"

"Pain cannot be of God, I know," the Dean went on, "because One who was His Son went about healing sickness, and He never called it anything less than sickness, nor did He call pain and death anything less than pain and death. Nor can its origin be traced to a deliberately imposed evil, because in

its ultimate results it has so often been proved to be both ennobling and purifying."

"How far is it ennobling or even educational?" Philip asked. "We give plants sunshine and rain because without these they cannot live. But we give human souls the dark, and hard ground, and no water, and we expect them to grow!"

"Yes, and they do grow," said the Dean.

"Towards heaven? Well, I won't give up belief in heaven, but it is a heaven I must not only share but create for my fellow-men. Pious folk say that home is a foretaste of heaven; and I, being a pagan and looking about in Newcastle or London slums, say they may be a foretaste of heaven, but at present they distinctly resemble hell. How can you preach to people before you have drained their houses?"

"Sanitation before sanctification?"

"Certainly. I would give all your Thirty-nine Articles for a nation of healthy children and protected women!"

"The lessons of life are being thundered at our doors and we won't listen!"

"Men talk," said Philip earnestly, "of the power of the Messiah to overcome sickness, pain, and death. Such acts come under the name of miracles, and a world that is not fond of accepting truth is very liable to adduce supernatural evidence of power which they believe necessary to draw the attention of people to the supernatural Christ. Personally, you understand, I do not believe in mir-

acles. Who has healed most suffering, your Messiah or Jenner? Who has prevented most pain, Lister or the Twelve Apostles? If spiritual things must be spiritually discerned, I submit that physical ills must be treated physically."

"Yet Jenner was a Christian and a devout believer, as was Lister also."

"You have used the only convincing argument against me," he admitted, "and one which leaves me always puzzled. The faith of our scientific men, how can it be explained? The prayers of surgeons beside cases on which they are lavishing the result of pure reason combined with physical skill baffles me."

"Prayer is more than an instinct."

"Prayer shows belief in magic and miracle," responded Philip quickly. "Well, I have told you, I believe in neither."

The Dean's face lighted in a smile which played very pleasantly upon his handsome features. "I have heard," he said, "of an idea even so extravagant and preposterous as calling down lightning from heaven, and such a thing would be, of course, counted one of the greatest of miracles. Yet in simple truth this is what our electrical engineers are doing every day of their lives, and the busy world hardly stands still to watch them!"

"If miracles can be proved to be not miracles," said Philip, smiling, "but merely the control and direction of forces, then I am with you directly in your most fervent beliefs."

"When you find your God," said the Dean, "He will be a great God, Sir Philip."

"When I find my God," said Philip, more eagerly than he had yet spoken, "I shall stand upright on my feet and look up into His face and say, 'I am Thy creation, and I glory in it. I am Thy creation, and therefore my nobility requires me to act as greatly and be as little petty as I can, and to be strong. I won't whine! If ever I should come to pray to Him, it would at least be in the belief that He was a Spirit, and that I must worship Him in spirit and in truth. I won't imagine that the condition of the Stock Exchange interests Him, or that I may pray for a rise in the price of rubber shares."

"These are the unanswered prayers of the world," murmured the Dean, "and men and women lose their faith because they are not answered."

"I wonder," said Sir Philip, smiling in the dark, "with what particular unorthodoxy it is that your friends brand you—is it Rationalism, perhaps?"

"Possibly," said the Dean, "and I should not consider it a hard name, because I believe so implicitly in the reasonableness of God."

The night was growing chilly, and they rose by common consent and moved towards the house, where the lamplight from the windows glowed warmly in the dark.

"To me," protested Philip, in the tone of one who deliberately excludes the critical methods in so intimate and personal a conversation as his with the Dean, "to me it is the want of reasonableness in

the world that puts me in opposition to the truth of the old argument from design."

"He does not pay by the piece," said the Dean, speaking to himself; "He waits until the end of the day to pay His wages."

"I believe," said Sir Philip, smiling, "that you are accrediting me with the cent.-per-cent. tradition of the Hebrew theologians."

"No," said the Dean, "I was merely thinking that youth would be too happy if youth could understand."

"The understanding that comes with years," said Sir Philip, with a note of regret in his voice, "is often, alas, merely the conviction of fatigue."

CHAPTER IV

ON the following day the old farmhouse of Cheston was visited by Philip and the Dean. It was an interesting Tudor building, probably the Manor House of long ago. The oak panellings were almost untouched, and there was about it an air of repose and ancient peace. The fishing was pronounced excellent, and Sir Philip took the little property for the summer months, after the briefest conversation with the owner. As the two friends drove homewards in the afternoon they met Mrs. Malincourt, who stopped her carriage to speak to the Dean, and he introduced his guest to her.

"Sir Philip Gurney!" she exclaimed, "why, I believe you must be the son of one of my oldest friends. Your poor mother and I were at school together." Most people spoke of Sir Philip's mother as his "poor" mother, and the term always made him wince. "You must come and see me," she said, with something of the peremptoriness of the fine lady from whom an invitation, not easily obtained, must always be readily accepted. "Come and cheer me in my seclusion. My niece will be charmed, I know."

The Dean excused himself on the plea of a clerical meeting. "But," he added, in a certain cour-

teous old-fashioned manner which was characteristic of him, "it was a matter of great regret to me to think of Sir Philip being in our neighbourhood without seeing the Court, and I hope," turning to him, "you will be able to go to-morrow?"

"You are most kind," murmured Sir Philip, when the invitation had been readily given.

Mrs. Malincourt bowed in her semi-royal fashion, and the carriage drove on. She was a stately old lady of a conventional type, with snowy-white hair, a high nose, and what is called a distinguished presence; she had few friends, but had never received an impertinence, and perhaps not very often a spontaneous caress in her life. A vain woman, with her vanity duly concealed by her good manners, she was one who, although she had lived all her life amongst great people and wealthy people, had an overdone appreciation of all that was great and wealthy; even her sincere love for her niece, Enid Malincourt, was due in a large measure to the proper respect which she felt for her position. The fact that she came between her own son and his possession of the property was a condition of affairs which Mrs. Malincourt accepted with dignity. The eldest son of the family must, of course, leave his property and his money to whom he liked—it was not entailed on male heirs—but perhaps all that might be put to rights some day! Mrs. Malincourt was an optimist, and believed that the right thing did generally happen. "What is the use of an immense property like this to a girl?" Mrs. Mal-

incourt used to say. "It will only make her a prey to the offers of needy younger sons, or audacious curates."

So, by way of rectifying the mistakes of Providence or of the late Lord Malincourt—the lady never knew quite which of these was to blame—she had arranged that her only son and his cousin should, like those delightful accommodating young people in poems and novels, fall in love with each other, that the estates should once more be joined to the title, and in this way the mistakes of Providence, or of Lord Malincourt, which she had accepted with so much dignity, would be repaired.

To further her righteous ends Mrs. Malincourt arranged, in a manner not very Machiavellian, that the cousins should be thrown much together. She invited her son to the Court, and provided such opportunities for his falling in love as riding and walking with Enid, and listening to her singing and enjoying her beauty, could give him. When the inevitable thing happened and Lord Malincourt fulfilled his mother's wishes, Mrs. Malincourt became alarmed. Hubert's love for his cousin was utterly beyond what she had intended for him. Mrs. Malincourt wanted a happy story-book ending, when she might picturesquely bless a smiling pair. Instead of this she had the picture before her of a young man leaving suddenly his boyhood behind him, and coming by a quick and painful transition to disappointed manhood. This summer, not so many weeks ago, he had asked his cousin to be his

wife, and she, startled out of her dreams and with a tragic sense of the pain which she unwittingly caused, had sent him away. Life had been a little perplexing since this, and Mrs. Malincourt had tried to be just, but had not perhaps altogether succeeded. It was no doubt a difficult matter for the woman of the world to realise the point of view of a nature that was altogether unworldly, and Mrs. Malincourt, with all her admiration for her niece, found herself wishing, not for the first time, that, even if some faults and frailties should be involved in the change, she could become more like the easily understood conventional girls of her acquaintance. "Any other girl," she argued, with a helpless sense of the fact that the ordinary rules of young womanhood could not be infallibly applied to her niece, "would have enjoyed the sense of conquest, would at least have been aware of it." And Enid, with her fine and almost too scrupulous sense of honour, might have checked it in time to prevent its being disastrous to the lover. But she had remained unconscious of his love to an extent that almost irritated the shrewd elder woman, and when the avowal of the young man's devotion had been made, her pain at refusing his request had been deeper than even Malincourt's mother deemed reasonable.

Mrs. Malincourt had refused half a dozen suitors in her own girlhood, and had not thought very much of it. But Enid, she reflected, was fanatical on the subject of not giving pain to any living thing.

She remembered, with a warm surging back again of her old affection and admiration for the girl, how even as a child she had removed helpless worms from the pathway, lest they might be trodden on, and had nursed wounded or maimed animals, or had spent her afternoon, scissors in hand, removing captive thrushes from the strawberry nets. How eager she was to assist the suffering and the sick in the town! How careless of herself! Impatient of her own opposing views, Mrs. Malincourt shrugged her shoulders and observed, "I wonder which I really want her to be, the saint that she is, or an ordinary worldly young woman?"

When Philip Gurney came to call, it must be confessed that Mrs. Malincourt was looking forward to a little mental refreshment of a lighter sort. Sir Philip came from the world of society and of books and letters and artists in which Mrs. Malincourt had a nice taste, and she hoped to hear of a dozen old friends and their doings from him. "If he is at all like his mother he ought to be charming. I wonder if she is still alive? Had anyone ever disappeared as poor Margaret had done, after that horrible tragedy in which she, always the best and the most sensitive of women, had committed moral suicide?

She remembered—her memory helping her in snatches—that this Philip, a boy at the time, had been deeply affected by his mother's ruin. One of the girls had gone into a Roman Catholic convent afterwards, from some motive, it would seem, of

expiation for her mother's sin—in having a wholly impossible husband—and the other had married a rich man. . . . But every one knew when she married him that there was madness in Mr. Bretherton's family. . . . Of course they had not much chance, poor girls. . . . With the son it was different.

She received him with quite unusual graciousness when he came to call, not abandoning her little air of royal patronage, but waiving it ceremoniously for the sake of a bygone friendship with the young man's mother. The friendliness became more pronounced as Philip interested her with accounts of her friends in the world of London. Then, leading the conversation to personal matters, she asked him about himself, speaking with the privilege of an old lady to a young man whom she had tipped in his Eton days, and rallying him with some sharpness on what she called a wasted career. "You really have no business to spend your life carving a lot of Popish figures and getting nothing for it. You ought to be fighting, or marrying, or doing something sensible," she said.

Philip smiled. "Carving is a very harmless amusement," he said; "I don't claim anything else for it."

"I suppose I don't understand modern young people," said Mrs. Malincourt, with a sigh for the unnecessary complexity of life, "but do you really spend your life carving roofs and church doors for Art's sake? The idea is very beautiful, I suppose,

but I don't think I like young men to be High Church; it is effeminate."

"It's very absorbing work, carving choir doors," said Philip pleasantly, "and I don't think one requires to be very ritualistic to appreciate some of the beautiful work that one meets in old churches."

"Well," said Mrs. Malincourt, relenting, "I must say I think it is very good-natured and more than generous of you to give your time in this way. You are staying with the Dean, are you not?"

"Yes, till next week, then I shall be fishing at Cheston."

Mrs. Malincourt professed herself delighted.

"That is not very far from here," she said. "How fortunate that we should have made acquaintance with each other yesterday, otherwise I suppose I should hardly have known you again! You are very like your poor mother."

Mrs. Malincourt must be pardoned in that she made ever so slight a pause after this excursion into the intimate. Her curiosity about the outer world was only half satisfied by the numerous letters which she still received from thence. She was really burning to know what had become of Lady Gurney.

"I believe I am considered like her," said Philip, in a tone that brought the conversation abruptly to an end.

Mrs. Malincourt rose, ashamed of her curiosity and of her clumsy, significant pause. "Would you like to go out?" she asked. "The house is really

beautiful as one sees it from the Italian garden, and we shall probably find my niece there."

They passed out at the garden door on to a broad terrace flagged with yellow-coloured stones. The terrace stretched from end to end of the house, and had stone seats, their arms carved with the Malincourt eagle upon them; some orange-trees and oleanders stood primly in a row in greenish-blue wooden tubs, and a deerhound slept upon the sunny pavement.

"This is what is supposed to be so fine," said Mrs. Malincourt, with a little exaggerated air of non-proprietorship, "this view of the Italian garden and the wooded hills beyond." She pointed out some objects of interest to him, and mentioned others that might be seen on the proverbial clear day.

The sun-baked stones of the terrace sent out a warm glow of heat as Mrs. Malincourt trailed her dress across them and stood by the broad balustrade, lightly touching its polished marble with her taper fingers. She was still a beautiful woman, and the way in which she had wound a lace scarf round her head showed her charming vanity. A broad flight of marble steps leading to the lower terrace parted in the middle and encircled a famous sundial, then descended in a dazzling uninterrupted sweep to the Italian garden.

"How very charming!" said Philip impulsively, his artistic eye eagerly appreciating the contrast of the prim, geometric-patterned garden, the curve

of the marble steps, and the wild uncultivated country beyond. A peacock advanced with hesitating, self-conscious steps along the balustrade and pecked daintily at Mrs. Malincourt's hand.

"My pretty dear!" said she, allowing her rings to flash in the sunlight as she caressed the peacock's bright plumage.

The whole scene was like a bit of stageland in which the audience is invited to consider itself transmigrated to the days of long ago. This stately lady, with her laces and jewels, her high-bred air and her excusable vanity, the mincing peacock, the deerhound lying on the terrace, and the sun setting in a sort of gauzy vapour behind the hills, appealed to Philip's artistic perception of the fitness of things. "This is what the world should be," he thought delightedly, "an artistic realisation of a beautiful ideal. The existence of poverty and sin and ugliness is an artistic blunder."

Quite suddenly the recollection of his own ruined boyhood smote him with a recollection that jarred horribly. The stately garden and the sunlight, and the air of peace and dignity in the world underneath his eye, were obliterated by the remembrance of that afternoon in foggy London, when he came home from his last half at Eton, elated by the position he had won there, glorying in his youth and the future that stretched before him, and longing impatiently to pour into his mother's ears something of his hopes, his ambitions, and his own passionate tenderness for herself. He felt "so young,

so strong, so sure of God" in those days! Living was in itself such a daily, hourly pleasure!

And then, as his cab drove through the crowded streets—he could hear them now—the hoarse-voiced newspaper-boys shouting like demons, "Scandal in high life! Full particulars!" Then followed the arrival at the whispering house, the horrible interview with his stern-faced father in the library, his boyish, impulsive flight from home that night to find his mother somewhere! anywhere! . . . The search proved fruitless, of course. He had never seen her again. One letter he had had from her, in which she prayed him not to make the irrevocable too hard by seeking her out. "I am lost," she had written—"lost to the world, lost to you, lost to God."

The harsh contrast of his thoughts with the vision of calm peace before him brought a stabbing sense of pain with it. "It was anyone's fault rather than hers that she had acted as she had done!" Hastily he summoned up the recollection of his childish days, when she had been a glorified being to him, someone altogether loving, wise, and beautiful, someone who was always ready with outstretched arms and smile, no matter how naughty he had been or how much in disgrace with his father.

Oh, to go back to those old days again, when everything was so easily understood, so beneficently ordered, so just and happy! But life had grazed rather sharply against Philip since then, and his mind, made sensitive by the searing red-hot touch

of dishonour which had scarred it, satisfied his passionate resentment by finding in existence a chaotic disorder, repulsive to his feelings by its triviality, its meanness, its dishonour, and its crimes.

But Malincourt seemed remote from the vulgar world, with its absurd strain and stress of living, its stupid women, its trivial men, its scarce-felt sorrows, and its overdone attempt at gaiety. Chattering crowds at parties, mock culture, skin-deep religion, overweening vanity, were the stamp of society! But here he drank in the harmonious quiet, the aloofness, the perfect beauty of the place with a deep-drawn breath of refreshment. He leaned his elbow on the balustrade and put his chin in his hands.

"I don't believe," he said, "that anything ugly or sordid has ever had any existence! They are only a bad dream, and one has wakened up at Malincourt!"

A girl's tall figure coming up the marble steps appeared at the moment when in the pageant the perfect time for her appearance had arrived. The westering sun behind her turned her hair to a gold nimbus round her head, while it threw her face into shadow. Her slender figure moved with a grace that had something measured and rhythmic about it. The deerhound leaped to meet her, and she came towards the two on the terrace with her hand locked lightly in the dog's collar.

"Enid!"

The name also was as it should be, the only name,

indeed, for the girl in the pale soft dress. She lifted her face and smiled. Ah! the pageant with its beautiful background was really dramatic, but its unreality had vanished suddenly. It seemed to Philip as though, without volition of his own, he had left his seat in the auditorium and found himself amongst the actors on the stage.

Mrs. Malincourt introduced her niece with a certain antique formality upon which she prided herself, and Enid laid her hand in his. As she did so, with eyes raised, there was a certain wistfulness in her look which asked pardon while it also forgave. This man with the human voice and face which had seemed to her divine, was he to blame because he had so sharply dispelled her vision, and at a moment of rapture had rendered it impossible for her to see the things that are beyond?

It would have been absurd, in the manner of the sixteenth century, to kneel and kiss her hand, yet it seemed to him that the action would have been more suitable than merely raising his hat. Some commonplace words, an apology for the start caused her in the cathedral, died away on his lips unsaid; it would have been desecration to talk of a meeting so fraught with a sense of something unusual, something rare and exquisite and touched with tragedy. He wished, with almost a boyish sense of clumsiness, that he could convey to her that he had no wish to intrude himself upon her, that the visit to Malincourt had been brought about by the desire of the Dean and her aunt. This also

remained unspoken. There was a tinge of ordinary-ness about the very thought which was abhorrent to his fastidious taste. Once her soul had been laid bare before him, and he shrank from having surprised the revelation, and found a difficulty in descending to commonplaces. It was so evident that to-day's meeting with him had something in it of restraint and of effort for her that it gave him a feeling of distress for which he could not find explanation. Could she really so much regret the shattering of the golden angel? Was the image connected in her mind with some of the ecstasy of prayer which he had surprised in the dim, sun-streaked cathedral? There was a mysticism in her face which would seem to warrant some explanation of this sort, and at the same time there was a certain profundity which forbade it. He said good-bye presently, and he had hardly spoken to her. The girl's eyes, with their look of forgiveness and of disappointment in them, rested once more upon him, but the clue was wanting to their mystery, and he left the enchanted spaces of the garden with their spell upon him.

CHAPTER V

THE summer passed by in its fulness, and blended into harmony its long sunny days and golden evenings, its lush growth of grass and flower, its beaming, soft landscapes, its trees in their ample soft covering of green, and the far-away blue haze upon the distant hills.

To Philip Gurney the time was one of peace and of waiting. The peace came from he knew not where, and the waiting was for he knew not what.

The old Manor House with its homely furnishings had been made into a very artistic summer-dwelling-place by him. The cool wide hall, with its red stone flags and oak-panelled walls, its deep window-seats, and the flickering soft lights that came through the trees outside, made an ideal sitting-room in summer-time.

The Dean had gone away on a six weeks' holiday, and country neighbours hardly disturbed the summer tenant of Cheston with their visits. The time was passed in a solitude which had no feeling of loneliness in it. Philip had an inexhaustible friendship with books, and this summer he felt that never before had he absorbed the beautiful in literature with such keen appreciation and pleasure. A new light was shed upon those works which he

knew well, while a fresh understanding of poetry and song came with a suddenness which had nothing in it of slow groping, but broke with a sense of instantaneous revelation and possession. The whole world pulsated with a tingling vibration, as though a chord had been struck which he had never heard before. There was a thrill of something magnetic in every common sound, in every common flower that blew its little trumpet to the sky. The music of the world played enchantingly, and everything moved in sympathy with the entrancing measure. The very sheep in the meadow; the cows, mild-eyed, sad, and stupid, who tore the trailing woodbine off the hedges, as they stood knee-deep in the rich grass and buttercups; the sheep-dogs barking in the fields, and the birds that brushed the air with their wings, all moved in time to some divine harmony and hitherto unknown rhythm. It was a pagan joy, but a joy that had something of loyalty in it too! A belief in the possibility of perfection? Nay, the fulness of time and of perfection had come.

He passed long days by the grassy river-bank with its stunted willow-trees and the cattle standing in the pleasant grass, and long evenings in the twilit hall. When night fell, boyhood seemed to come again in dreams. And all the time the world was singing, as it had never sung before! The birds were calling, and the very sky was ringing with an essential peace, a thrilling joy and worship. He never now saw in the cathedral the girl's figure

with the bowed golden head, but though the carved stall was empty, she lived somewhere—the heavenly vision had not completely passed him by. For him, too, light shone in the darkness, and a spirit in prison had had a glimpse into the golden world. “She lives for me,” is the love-song of the human man; but the poet voices a shorter, sweeter song. “She lives!” is enough for Dante till heaven is reached. “She lives” brought a new sense of living to Philip.

It did not suggest itself to him to pay a conventional call at Malincourt. It would have been like leaving one’s card at the gate of Paradise. But still he seemed to see her moving about the garden, now like a spirit in her white gown when twilight was falling; or standing in the sunshine, a flower among her flowers. He thought, “I am not anxious that she does not come to the cathedral as before, for if she were in sickness or in peril I should know it. I could not be glad if anywhere, even unknown to me, she were not glad also.” But each afternoon found him in his choir stall at Even-song, even when the days shortened a little and the declining sun no longer fell upon her radiant figure when the bells chimed the hour of five. The June sunshine at the hour of prayer had smitten through the scarlet cloak of St. Agnes with a rosy shaft of colour; now in August it streamed through the more tempered colouring of St. Peter’s voluminous brown robe, and “the massy keys of metal twain” which he bore in his hand,

"How soon," Philip wondered, "do the real and the unreal become confused? The saints of old were perfectly justified in saying that they had seen visions. One has only to worship and to be alone, and then the visions come."

The Dean had returned home, and Philip bent his steps towards the Deanery with the scarce realised thought that human companionship, even where we regret its necessary superficiality, rubs the eyes wholesomely when dreams have become too much the only reality. As he crossed the road, the Malincourt carriage was drawn up at a shop-door in the town, and Mrs. Malincourt herself, crossing the pavement under the convoy of an obsequious tradesman, delayed his passage for a moment, and she stopped and held out her hand to him.

"Dear Sir Philip! It is such a long time since we met, and I had hoped that, being near neighbours, we might have seen much of each other; but you know, of course, what dreadful trouble we have been in?"

The afternoon shadows had begun to cool the rough old stones of the town. The high-swung yellow carriage with its grey horses standing in the shade, the erect figure of the white-haired lady sitting in it, were toned into quiet by the dimness of the street. There was nothing to be afraid of in the way of infection, Mrs. Malincourt said—she would not, of course, be shopping like this if there were—but undoubtedly it was a fever contracted

in one of those horrible cottages where her niece was wont to visit. Such visits were really a mistake. "The tone of the people," which every one talked so much about nowadays, was no more raised by intercourse with a woman like Miss Malincourt than one of the lower orders of animals would have its artistic spirit developed by living in the Parthenon. There was nothing to build upon in these people; they could not understand a cultured mode of thought.

Philip checked her volubility when he could, by a sharp direct question: "Is she better?"

"Yes, to-day," said Mrs. Malincourt. "There really seems to be a little change for the better, otherwise I should not have left home. It is the first day I have done so; and there are two nurses in the house, excellent young women who can be relied upon to take every care of the invalid. You yourself, Sir Philip, may I say it, look very white. I hope you are not ill."

"I am quite well, thank you," he said briefly. The first feeling of shock and fear was followed by a sharp sense of disgust with himself that he had not known, without being told, that she was ill, and had lived contentedly while she suffered. His intuition had failed him, and he muttered impatiently that intuitive knowledge was a matter of feeling without any foundation in fact. He found himself asking Mrs. Malincourt in conventional tones if he might be allowed to call and ask for news of the invalid from day to day.

He might certainly call, she said, with her unconsciously lofty manner of condescension to those to whom she spoke. "We have been terribly anxious about my dear niece, and I believe that nothing but her docility to treatment has pulled her through." Most good things in Mrs. Malincourt's eyes could be traced to the Malincourt disposition. "Come to-morrow, and if my niece is as well as she is to-day, I will give myself the pleasure of coming down to the drawing-room and having a chat with you."

He called the next afternoon, and learned that Mrs. Malincourt could see no one; Miss Malincourt had taken a turn for the worse. The servant who spoke to him, a young footman in the old-fashioned light-blue liveries of the house, was wet-eyed, and on further inquiry came the information that but little hope was entertained for his young mistress's recovery.

Philip had almost uttered "Absurd!" It was an outrage to common reason to connect the idea of death with this young and beautiful creature. The very thought had something in it so unnatural, so ghastly, that he pushed it from him with a gesture of impatience and disgust. Not expected to recover! Then the only alternative was death! How could so fair a thing die and become a skeleton, a creature of dust, a corpse laid in the grave? Dead! this being of youth and loveliness and grace! An inert, useless thing, features and form disappearing, golden hair fading, eyes closed! Horrible!

The thing could not be. It was impossible to connect ever so faintly the picture his mind had conjured up with that other vision of a fair woman of flesh and blood, a moving, breathing, radiant being with her grave eyes and her air of nobleness and health and grace.

The horrible extravagant waste in nature appalled him. He thought of beauty decaying with no result, and of intellect robbed of its final and laudable ends. Death comes. The man who has studied gets perhaps as far as the man who studied before him; the singer leaves nothing behind him.

He wandered into the gardens, not heeding where he went, but moving with the automatic motion of a sleep-walker, while his soul cried out to rush within the silent house where she lay, and shield her by his own arm from Death. The flowers bloomed hotly in their August splendour of colouring as he paced blindly between the flaming borders. "*It can't be,*" he was saying to himself; "it's all some ghastly dream." What order was there in the universe after all?—what justice, not to speak of mercy, for the helpless beings who are placed without any choice of their own in this misgoverned, pitiful world?

Some children were playing at the lodge-keeper's gate as he passed out between the stone eagles on their rough-hewn pillars. The lodge-keeper's wife came out and asked him with a curtsey if he would be kind enough to tell her the latest news from the house.

"She is worse, I am told," said Philip shortly; and he turned, not heeding the woman's exclamation of grief, and walked back into the gardens again. He must stand where she had stood, must kiss the very ground where her feet had rested. Here she had stood, with her deerhound by her side, the smile of forgiveness on her lips, and the request for pardon in her eyes. He thought of her now, tossing on her bed in a fever of delirium, and passionately he declared that suffering was in itself an error in the realms of natural law. He recalled the sick-beds he had seen—the sad patients with their tired faces, and their hands pitifully clutched beneath the sheets, their helplessness and their pain, their weariness and discomfort, their feeble look and dimly-comprehending brain, and their horrible vanquishment by lower things.

Then the personal note predominated, and the cruelty to himself if she should die became apparent. She had something for him, some message of deliverance, which no one else could bring him.

"Enid! Enid!" he cried, "I love you with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength. My gentle saint, we had our marriage-day when our souls rushed together up through the shafts of sunlight to the cathedral roof. Day by day I watched you; it was a long courtship, beloved. Day after day I tried to win one upward glance from you; and then our wedding-day broke when soul met soul, and the trembling golden angel fell and was shattered at your feet. And now this clumsy,

heedless, blind thing which we call nature's law has stricken you and wasted you with pain, and left me alone." He sat down heavily on one of the stone benches in the old garden, and waited there until nightfall, then rose and walked to the house again to inquire for her. He found his voice failing him. "Is she—is she—?" The words remained in his throat.

"She is sleeping," said the man.

Day after day he asked for news of her, and then walked out far into the solitary country, only to return and ask for news again. His books remained untouched, and he wandered restlessly about the small grounds of his house. The poet's peaceful dreaming was over, and he longed passionately, in common human fashion, to see his beloved again.

At last there came a cooler day, in the long hot month of August, when her nurses carried her in her helplessness down to the old stone seat upon the terrace, and laid her upon cushions in the shade, and there Philip found her.

He had forgotten that, while his love had leaped and grown, and spread its wings and soared over every common thought, to her he was but an acquaintance of yesterday. In the ravings of fever she had not called upon his name, and while he fain would have knelt at her feet, and could hardly have told her all his joy in that she had been restored to him; for her, to look at his face was to remember that the revelation which seemed to have been vouchsafed to her by God Himself, the being

whom she had almost worshipped, was but a carver of fruits and flowers up in a cathedral roof. She greeted him kindly. Was it his fault that she had mistaken his beautiful face for that of the Saviour of men?

"You are better?" he said, as he stood by the stone seat with its carvings and silk cushions, and his voice had a note of triumph in it, almost as of one who had himself triumphed over death and the devouring grave. His eyes grew misty as he looked at her, and he was smiling without knowing that he did so.

Her aunt fluttered about her, rather tremulous after so many weeks' anxiety, but saying little, with the pride of a woman who has a wholesome contempt for emotion. "Poor Malincourt!" she murmured once. The sight of her niece in her pale helplessness led her sympathies quickly towards the recently rejected lover; yet even as she sighed for him she shook her head. A wife, if she have wings, should keep them clipped.

The afternoon passed away almost in silence; the shadows on the terrace were long and cool and pleasant. Some doves, wafting down to the pavement with hardly a flutter of their soft wings, made a pleasant purring sound as they strutted to and fro, preening themselves and swelling their burnished breasts with a charming air of innocent importance. The deerhound slept with his head stretched out on his paws. One of the nurses came out to the side doorway that gave on to the terrace,

and suggested that the patient should be carried indoors, again; but Enid said, "I think I get stronger out here amongst the flowers."

"No talking, then," said the nurse, laying her finger playfully upon her lips, and disappearing into the house again.

"Might one read to you?" said Philip.

And she answered, smiling, "Thank you; that is what I should like above all things. Will you read to me?"

He read her the story of Saint Theresa, for that was the book that she chose for the reading. Mrs. Malincourt slept in her chair, the pecking doves fluttered up to the grey buttresses of the roof, and the man's voice was the only sound that broke the stillness of the afternoon. The book of Saint Theresa was bound in some smooth skin and tooled in gold, with a coat of arms stamped upon the cover. The hot scent of mignonette was wafted upwards from the garden.

"I was praying one day—it was the feast of the glorious St. Peter—when I saw Christ close to me, or to speak more correctly felt Him, for I saw nothing with the eyes of the body, nothing with the eyes of the soul. He seemed to me to be close beside me, and I saw too, as I believe, that it was He who was speaking to me. As I was utterly ignorant that such a vision was possible, I was extremely afraid at first and did nothing but weep; however when He spoke but one word to me to reassure me, I recovered myself and was, as usual,

calm and comforted without any fear whatever. Jesus Christ seemed to be beside me continually, and as the vision was not imaginary, I saw no form but had a most distinct feeling that He was always at my right hand as a Witness of all I did, and never at any time, if I was but slightly recollected or not too much distracted, could I be ignorant of His near Presence. . . .

"Some time after this our Lord proceeded further, and showed Saint Theresa first His sacred hands, and then after some days His divine face, and lastly He appeared to her as He is frequently represented in the mystery of the Resurrection. She was as usual very much frightened at first, especially wondering at the gradual manner in which He thus manifested Himself to her. She learned afterwards that He was compassionately dealing with her, as with the disciples after the Resurrection, according to the weakness of her nature. 'You will think,' she says, 'that it required no great courage to look upon hands and face so beautiful. But so lovely are glorified bodies that the glory which surrounds them renders those beside themselves who see that which is so supernatural and beautiful.' This she says about the earlier visions of the Sacred Humanity. Of the third she says, 'On one of the Feasts of St. Paul when I was at Mass, there stood before me the most Sacred Humanity as painters represent Him after the Resurrection in great beauty and majesty. . . . If in Heaven itself there was nothing else to

delight our eyes but the great beauty of glorified bodies that would be an excessive bliss, particularly the vision of the Humanity of Jesus Christ our Lord.' ”

He raised his eyes from the book, and found that she had covered her eyes with her hand, lest he should see that she was weeping.

“I have tired you!” he exclaimed. “What can I do? May I call one of your attendants?”

She detained him with her hand. “No, no; it is weakness; I am not very strong yet.” Then, in a tone half of penitence, half of exquisite regret, she said, “But I am envious of this saint. I have so longed for the vision that was granted to her, but indeed to very few is it allowed to anticipate the glories of the future life, and I do not know how I could even have dared to ask that the boon might be mine.”

“Who else should ask it?” he said.

“To me it seems so long to wait until I can see Him as He is, and lately it has seemed God’s will that I should have two disappointments. First of all—you will not grieve if I tell you this—I was in the cathedral that day, and I was praying for a fuller vision. I thought that Christ had indeed revealed Himself to me in human form, and I had almost worshipped Him, and then—then the golden angel fell (you may perhaps remember the day that it fell), and you stood beside me and the vision was not for me. It was not Christ up there against the sky; it was you.”

"I cannot imagine a more ironical mistake," he said.

"Your face is such as one sees in pictures of our Lord," she went on simply. "I fear that now in my weakness I speak too freely to you of these things, and yet I must tell you one of them. One night they told me, these kind people who have been watching me in my fever, that I could not live through the night, and I felt then that, like the vision of Saint Theresa, the sight of you had been sent to prepare me for that fuller vision. But my youth or strength triumphed over the spirit, and I have come back to earth again and have not seen my Lord."

"Please do not say these things!" said Philip impetuously; "I beg it of you! The grave will come quickly enough—far too quickly!"

"But after the grave? . . ." Presently she looked round at the woods and garden, and the old house with its buttresses and gables, and its long grey shadows cast upon the lawn. "All these belong to me, and were I not here they would be my cousin Malincourt's. . . . And so much possession is in any case a burden, and something of a hindrance to one's progress towards the more beautiful life."

Philip spoke so gently that his words hardly caused an interruption. "It seems to me," he said, "that there could not be a more beautiful life."

"When I am of age," she said, "I am going into a convent. I was brought up in a convent, and it

has always been my wish to return to it. At first my director was opposed to it; now, however, he has given his consent. My aunt will, I think, be consoled by having her son here with her always, and it will make Malincourt a little happier to have this old house which he loves. You see," she ended, smiling a little, "my place could be better filled. I am not running away!"

Mrs. Malincourt sat up in her chair and arranged the laces of her cap. "Can I have been asleep," she said. "Ah! it was your beautiful reading, Sir Philip. Come again," she added, as she wished him good-bye. "You will be our neighbour a little longer, will you not? And you must come and read to my niece another time."

"Thank you," said Sir Philip; "I shall like to come."

In two more years the convent would swallow her up, and the gates would close upon her, and he would never see her again. . . . This hideous gospel of self-annihilation. . . . He ground his heel against the pavement and said good-bye.

CHAPTER VI

SIR PHILIP's sister wrote to him, suggesting that she would like to come down and see his summer quarters before he quitted them. Mrs. Bretherton never penned her letters in a manner very gracious, and in reading them the recipient would generally find himself or herself unconsciously placing in the balance over against these strange, curt epistles some act of kindness or generosity on the part of Mrs. Bretherton which outweighed the grimness and brevity of her communications, or the hardness of her speech. It was customary to say of her that her bark was worse than her bite.

Mrs. Bretherton took pains to insist that she was coming merely to see her brother's house, and the letter ended: "I shall not come if you do not want me, and I shall certainly not come if you have any visitors staying in the house, as a country-house party is an abomination in another person's house. In one's own it is quite bearable, because one chooses one's own guests and one's own hours. I am quite sure that I am a savage at heart, and another savage's wigwam always makes me feel as though I were in prison. I shall not bring Reggie; I am afraid he would be in the way. Other people's children are always a bore."

"Why Inez should always imagine the least agreeable possibilities," mused Philip, "I have never been able quite to understand. But doubtless she is oversensitive, and perhaps I ought to have sent her and the boy an invitation to stay with me before."

He replied in a playful strain to the note written in his sister's firm, decisive hand, and, disregarding her instructions, he drove to the station to meet her and his nephew, whom she had consented to bring with her. No one was allowed to look after Mrs. Bretherton's luggage for her. She had a very small opinion of other people's intellects, especially those of servants; and her maid, who was not a stupid girl when she first entered her service, was now as hopelessly irresponsible as Mrs. Bretherton had always assumed her to be. She went to the luggage van and pointed out her boxes to the porter herself, and then she stepped into her brother's high dogcart, remarking, "You should have done as I asked you, Philip. I infinitely prefer a station fly to a two-wheeled dogcart, and I dislike being met at railway stations. Have you ever noticed how truly idiotic are the ejaculations that people throw at each other on railway platforms?"

"A last conversation at a railway carriage window is almost worse," said Philip, laughing. "But we really have not ejaculated, have we? I do not believe I even said how well you are looking, or how much Reggie has grown!"

Inez smiled a little. "And you have borne to ask me if I had a comfortable journey! What

is the difference between a comfortable journey and an uncomfortable one? The question, I suppose, is a survival of coaching days, when roads might perhaps be almost impassable, or the cold so great that one was half-frozen."

"If one travels by railway in a first-class carriage, with plenty of books and magazines, one's journey is always fairly comfortable," said Philip. "Whereas a third-class carriage with babies and parcels must, I suppose, be the height of discomfort."

Reggie pleaded to be allowed to drive in the luggage-cart, and sat himself down on the top of some portmanteaux, and the brother and sister drove homeward together through the lanes.

"How is poor Tom?" said Philip.

"Quite well, thank you," replied his sister. "Tom, as you are perfectly aware, has been insane for eight years, and when I am asked every day by my friends as to his state of health, I can only suppose that they want to know if he is free from measles, cough and cold, and other minor afflictions."

"He is no better mentally, then, I am afraid?" queried Philip.

"The thing is incurable," replied Mrs. Bretherton in her bright voice. "Reggie had a feverish attack the other day; he looked exactly like his father when he was ill."

"Dear Inez, your mind dwells too much on the probability of hereditary taint. It is as unlikely

that Reggie should become insane as that you or I should."

"The possibilities are two to one," remarked his sister.

"He is a healthy, jolly little chap, without a morbid thought in his head!"

Mrs. Bretherton's lips parted into a smile. Her unusually plain, powerful face had little that was attractive in it, except its look of power and keen intelligence. Beyond this her only claim to personal beauty lay in her tall, vigorous figure, and the masses of thick brown hair which she possessed.

"It won't attack him until he is sixteen," she was saying, in the hard metallic voice with which she usually discussed this matter. "In the Bretherton family insanity is so well understood that at least it can give one no surprises! Later on there will be a long period in which the brain is perfectly normal again, and then after some years there will be lapses into apathy, and then—well, you know Tom's condition, and so— The country about here is pretty, Philip. . . . Is this your house?"

"Yes," said Philip; "it is mine for the summer at least. I hope you approve of it?"

"I have not seen it yet," responded Mrs. Bretherton. "The outside—no, I don't care for Tudor houses; they look so horribly virtuous, with a spurious air of Christmas festivities about them! And gables always remind me of poke-bonnets!"

"I have been racking my brains," said Philip, as they entered the wide, flagged hall, "to know how

to make the place comfortable for you ; but with all my ingenuity the only thing I could think of was to get down from London a few easy-chairs and a sofa for your room."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Bretherton ; "I'm glad that you remember my taste for luxury. Reggie should have been here by this time," she added, taking out her watch. She got up and walked to the garden door, whence a view of the road could be commanded, and there was an expression of anxiety on her face. "A woman who fusses over her children is really very much more troublesome than the children themselves," she remarked, and came back to the hall, where she lay in her chair with a resolute expression on her face, while she deliberately chatted on indifferent matters, and ate bread and butter and drank tea with an air of unconcern.

Presently the boy, a singularly handsome youth, appeared in the doorway, eager to recount the adventures which had detained him. A cart of coals had broken down in the narrow lane, the horse had fallen, and he described his efforts at helping to raise him up again and to put the coal back into the cart.

"Which probably accounts for your looking like a coal-heaver now," said Mrs. Bretherton. "Go and get clean, and then come and have your tea."

"I am engaged to have tea with the man who drove me here," said the boy. "I know which is his house in the village, for he pointed it out to me.

We are going to have tea and bacon and eggs at half-past six—if you don't mind?"

"I do not mind in the least," said Inez. Her jealousy was often shown in the quick way she repudiated any wish to detain her son with her anywhere.

"Have you heard from Grace lately?" asked Philip presently, with the habit of checking off each member of the family on the first night of meeting with one of them, which is not uncommon between brothers and sisters.

"No," said Mrs. Bretherton, "but I have spoken to her through a grille. When Grace has quite persuaded herself that she has neither flesh nor blood, neither friends nor relations, neither a mouth nor a nose, nor eyes, nor natural feelings, she will, I suppose, think that her Nirvana has been attained. Why, I wonder, should such a life always win for itself the epithet of 'good.' "

"The Hebraic spirit," said her brother lightly. "We are saturated with it, even when we believe it does not touch us. Murder is wrong, but to go as nearly as possible towards destroying the life of the body is right. Strange that those who extol their Creator and the wonder of His works take it upon themselves to despise His highest creation."

"Even her hair is cut off," said his sister. "You remember how beautiful Grace's hair was—and her clothing is of the coarsest. Yet she tells me she is gloriously happy—perhaps in the way that the dead

are happy. May I have the lamps lighted, please? I hate twilight."

"Do you?" said Philip. "I always think it is a peaceful time."

"I don't know that I particularly care for peace, and if ever I feel in low spirits I draw up the blinds or send for some more candles."

There were a number of books, magazines, and pamphlets on the table in the hall. Dinner was ended, and Reggie having reappeared and then gone to bed, Mrs. Bretherton became absorbed in reading, and hardly spoke during the rest of the evening. "I have been talking for six weeks in what one is pleased to call, in a limited sense, society," she said, "and now I am not going to talk at all unless I feel inclined. Have you ever discovered, Philip, that more time is wasted in mutual self-sacrifice than in anything else in the world? To be happy and to make other people happy one should do exactly what pleases oneself best."

"What I dislike about a sense of duty," said her brother, "is that it is so horribly infectious."

"I used to pay duty calls," Inez went on, "although I knew that, while I was wishing fervently on one side of the door that my friends were not at home, they were hoping just as fervently that my ring at the door-bell did not mean a caller. Oh, I have had people coming to see me when I was ill! Could anything be more absolutely distasteful than that? I could see my dutiful friends trying to overcome their very natural dislike to a hot sickroom

and a dull invalid, while I knew all the time how much effort was required to control their sensations. I have even pretended to enjoy hothouse grapes because they were brought to me. Then the letters one used to write, because someone might care to hear from one, and the bore they found it to have to reply to them! The conversation, even, one has made!"

"Society is nearly always a bore," said Philip, "but I rather believe in good manners, you know."

"I believe in them," said Inez, "if I am perfectly sure they are insincere, and that there is a good solid ground of selfishness underlying them all."

Philip laughed; and as Inez seemed for the time disinclined for conversation, he wandered out presently into the garden with his cigar. He never realised, except when he was with his sister, how disagreeable some of their family characteristics were. It was a heritage, perhaps, from their father, whose pride it was wont to be that he had never asked a favour in his life, and had never granted one. "What is just I shall do, and what is just I shall expect," he used to say. "To do more, or to expect more than this, is simply mendicancy in its most abject form." What a harsh creed theirs was in spite of its sincerity and its obvious truthfulness! His own poetic temperament and love of beauty had softened its outlines, and there was much of poor Margaret Gurney in her son. But in Inez Brether-ton, and certainly in her father, reasonableness was a little overstrained. Undisguisedness of motive

had a certain bareness about it; one seemed to see its very bones as one sees the bones of a skeleton.

"I must ask the Dean to be charitable and come and dine with us one night," he thought. "My sister Inez would die for one on the scaffold with perfect equanimity, but that does not make her an entirely sympathetic companion. It has always seemed a little strange to me how some of the men one knows make confidants of their sisters. Imagine telling my good Inez about Enid Malincourt! I don't know anything that would afford her more amusement, and that is the sort of thing a lover does not care to afford his sister."

The garden door of the house opened, letting out a flood of light on to the lawn, with its trim yew-hedges, and its flower-beds filled with hollyhocks and dahlias and gaudy old-fashioned flowers.

Inez came out in a marvellous green-satin tea-gown. "Are you there, Philip?" she called out into the darkness; and he came forward and linked his arm in hers. These two were friends of a lifetime, with that strong, undemonstrative friendship which is perhaps deepest where it has suffered through family tragedies.

"I hate leaning upon people," Inez said, withdrawing her arm from his.

Philip laughed, and said, "Have you ever forgiven Nature for having made you a woman, Inez?"

"Teach a woman to be strong, Philip. Allow her, of your charity, not to remain always a child,

and we can dispense with the title ‘the weaker sex.’ ”

He thought of the sorrow that had perforce made her strong and self-reliant, and his voice softened. “You must let me take care of you a little bit while you are here,” he said. “Don’t be altogether independent of me, Inez.”

“Dear Philip! Shall you put a guard round the fireplace, or hinder me getting into your high dog-cart by offering me your hand? Shall you put up my parasol for me, and tear its chiffon frills, or fan me when it is a warm day?”

The picture rose before him of a girl lying on cushions in the shadow of an old house, clothed in soft draperies that seemed to ripple over the couch like little waves upon the shore; and he saw again her pale thin hands lightly clasped, heard her soft voice, and saw her golden hair. To do service for her was surely the greatest pleasure of a man’s life. He counted jealously the afternoons he had sat beside her, reading from the smooth calf-bound volumes with their quaint lettering and their fragrance of piety and devotion.

There was that first day, never surpassed by any sunlit summer day that had dawned before or since, when they had read together of St. Theresa and her heavenly vision. Then there was the day of Dante, the book of his own choosing, in which, with a voice used by long residence in Italy to soft sounds, he had read to her of Beatrice. “Their poem,” he called it, as though no lovers before had

claimed this love story for their own. . . . He closed his eyes for a moment and recalled that day. He remembered that there was a bowl of roses on the table by the couch, and their scent had seemed to mingle with the sound of the beautiful words, and sound again responded to colour, till colour and sound and scent and life and love and beauty had run together and mingled and overflowed in waves of sheer ecstasy. And there had followed the days in which, fearful of transgressing, he had sought to turn his steps away from the road to Malincourt, and then with boyish exultation had glorified in his own defeat, and had only walked more quickly towards the eagle-guarded gates. Later, there came a time of early autumn rains spent in the low-roofed library, when she sat in a high-backed chair and was able to ply her hands amongst her embroideries again. On one day the book they read was the book of Thomas à Kempis, holiest of teachers and divinest of thinkers, whose every thought to the man who read seemed as beautiful as its reasoning was fallacious. Well, let beauty stand! Beauty was a cult in itself; for the sake of beauty and for the sake of Enid Malincourt he would love the book as she did. On that day there had been a faint colour in her cheeks for the first time; he remembered a robin had perched on the window-sill and sung, and the room had white flowers in it. And there was the very last day of all, when she had leaned on his arm as they walked together on the terrace. Her dress trailed softly

on the sunny stones, her light touch tingled through him still. That was the first occasion on which there had been no reading, no thoughtful quiet discussion over the book chosen. Then it was herself only, and not even a dead poet came between them! Question after question he had asked her, only to gain from her the delight of her replies, only to hear her voice vibrating close beside him.

"Poor Malincourt!" Mrs. Malincourt had said, looking from the library windows, "the dearest niece in all the world, the owner of Malincourt with its stately house and rolling acres of land, must do as she pleased. Poor Malincourt!"

"Are you tired?" Philip had said, as her dear weight dragged upon his arm.

"Yes." A sudden faintness overcame her, and he lifted her up in his arms and carried her into the house. Before she opened her eyes he held her close to him and kissed her once; and the kiss was not a stolen sweet, but an offering made by love at a shrine.

Mrs. Bretherton was a delightful companion for a lover whose egotism absorbed every thought. Her powers of conversation were shown for the most part in the genius she had for closing any subject that was started, with something of the air of one who by a clever move declares checkmate. If, as was not unlikely, she guessed that something (probably the old egotistical story of love) accounted for her brother's unusual taciturnity, Inez was not the woman to make any comment upon it. She

considered that men in love are unusually fatiguing, and she shrank from inviting confidences which would doubtless be considered singular by the person who made them, whereas in all probability they would be merely tiresome. Curiosity was not a strong point with her; she did not believe that, were it satisfied, the subject could possibly be of sufficient interest to warrant her to care to hear it. Nevertheless she had gained a character for being a good listener, had never divulged a secret, even when the matter seemed too trivial for secrecy, and she had probably had more confidences made to her than any other woman in England.

She walked rather rapidly with long, determined steps up and down the lawn, making her several journeys to either end of it as though bent upon reaching some object as quickly as possible, and then, facing round, walked abruptly in the opposite direction.

The pace suited her brother's absorbed mood, until he noticed how rapid their walk was becoming, when he stopped and asked, smiling, "Are you walking for a wager?"

"I am walking for my health," said Inez. "Health is my hobby at present. It is rather amusing if you don't believe in it; but sit down if you are tired." She looked at a watch on her wrist, holding the dial close to her face to see it by the moonlight. "I have seven minutes still to do," she said, "and then I shall go in and go to bed."

Perhaps it would be more civil to finish the walk

together! Philip fell into stride again with her, marching towards the hedge of sweet-peas that divided the lawn from the kitchen garden, and then facing about to the lichen-covered brick wall with heavy-weighted plum-trees upon it, on the other side of which ran the road to the village.

Inez shortened her walk by five minutes. "I hate people to do things for me," she thought impatiently; and, bidding her brother good-night, she finished her prescribed exercise between the door and the window of her own room.

Philip lighted a cigar and paced forth into the night again. The darkness was full of perfume and wordless sounds. He crossed the box-edged pathway with its bordering of flowers, and thought what strange colours the geraniums and phloxes and hollyhocks had taken to themselves in the moonlight—all wan and mysterious and pale. The sweet-briar by the hedge brushed softly against him as he passed, the red maple by the gate had quenched its blazing colours, and the medlar tree on the lawn looked as though its leaves were wrought in stitch-work against a background of blue and silver. He went and sat in an arbour cut out of a turret of yew fifty feet high. His face and his heart were turned towards Malincourt.

He had not begun to consider yet, and with the perennial youthfulness of a lover his first thought was a boyish, fatuous impulse of gladness that the same moon looked down upon them both. He smiled at the vacuity of the idea, and again was

half vexed with himself. The stars in the heavens were not fighting for him or caring for him, any more than during Enid's illness had the psychic world aided him by giving him knowledge of her peril. "Yet I shall begin to imagine soon," he said, "that my love affairs are of moment to the Maker of the Universe, or, like pious folk, I shall believe that amongst the millions of inhabitants of this world and the probability of many millions more in other worlds, some one has made a special study of my affairs, and ordained that I should come to a sleepy cathedral town and find Enid—a reward, perhaps! Pious people always have a keen notion of rewards—a reward, perhaps, for beautifying His cathedral with some carved apostles and wreaths of flowers. Pah! I will not take my happiness on those terms.

"Even her faith could not ask this of me," he went on more doubtfully. "We are a man and a woman standing alone, and responsible to no one but each other. I love her with every power and possibility of my nature, and I should consider myself fortunate if by dying I could do her some service. If she loves me, then let us go through life together, accepting its responsibilities, meeting all its mistakes, its thoughtlessness, its cruelty, with courage; making our happiness for and in each other, and therefore rendering ourselves impervious to any evil, short of separation, which may overtake us. And if she does not love me—if she does not

love me"—the philosophic view of this aspect of things was more difficult to find—"if she does not love me, then no nonsense about resignation to the eternal good that orders all things. Egoists though all we lovers are, I will not believe that the Maker of the stars and the planets is personally interested in my love affairs! If she does not love me, then the thing has to be faced as a man faces it, not like a beggar who has been deprived of a favour, who has asked a boon but has not received it. I will say no prayer on my own behalf, nor cheat myself into the delusion of thinking that an act of faith can win her to me."

"She loves and prays," a voice within him said.

"Long may she do so, my saint upon her knees," he gave back answer joyously, and meant every word he said. Let this beautiful woman's faith remain with her like the fragrant, fond thing it was. Such faith as hers had built the cathedral and carved its wooden doors; its madonnas and long-robed saints testified to a world saved by a twofold power of beauty and of love. In that company she should ever remain undisturbed by him. Faith had made her what she was; then let her dear faith remain!

For himself, not even to win her love would he ask for a mediator between him and her. The depth of his own affection made her response secure, and he laughed with a sort of joyous scorn at the need of a helper on his side. "She and I are answerable

to one another and to no one else, and I will not cringe and supplicate for any intervention between us two! For me a man's heart fairly offered and a woman's heart fairly won!"

CHAPTER VII

"So you are going to marry Enid Malincourt?" said Mrs. Bretherton a few days later. "What a strange thing!"

"It is a marvellous thing!" said Philip. He spoke gravely, but in his self-centred joy there was just then a craving for sympathy, a lover's egoistical longing to talk of the beloved one. He drew his chair up close to his sister. The two were sitting in the panelled hall at Cheston, and a bright fire was burning in the grate, for the evenings were beginning to be chilly.

"The best and the most beautiful woman in England is going to marry me; that seems to me very marvellous, Inez!" He burst into a happy laugh, and took his sister's hand in his with an affectionate impulse. "Tell me," he said, "that she is good and beautiful; I love to hear it said."

"I have only seen her twice," said Mrs. Bretherton, "and ethereal beauty always has rather an irritating effect upon me."

"I know what you mean," he said kindly, although his voice had a trace of disappointment in it. "You like a woman to look more capable of receiving the hard blows of the world, and who can stand alone."

Mrs. Bretherton made an impatient movement. "Such a wonderful proceeding on a woman's part!" she said, with a short laugh. "Considering the perfectly efficient state of our social laws, the dangers that are supposed to beset our paths are mere bogies to frighten us into matrimony!"

Philip withdrew his hand. "Wish me joy," he said boyishly. "You have not wished me joy yet, Inez; and after all we have always been a good deal to each other, have we not?"

"Oh yes," said Inez, "our friendship has its roots in very firm if in very rough soil, and now that you are marrying—" She stopped abruptly. "Well, I always have Reggie."

"You will always have me too," said Philip, and his hand moved towards her again.

Mrs. Bretherton rose as though in repudiation of these very unusual tokens of affection; she fetched a writing-board and placed it upon her knee, spreading a piece of notepaper upon it in preparation for writing a letter. "Please don't tell me that I shall not lose a brother, but only gain a sister," she said lightly.

There was nothing heard for some time after but the movement of her pen upon the paper before her. "I am writing to Tom," she said. "Any message?"

Philip wondered what sort of a message would be acceptable to a man in a lunatic asylum. "No," he said, "I don't think there is anything. You might tell him to wish me luck," the youthful craving for sympathy again showing itself.

"Write him a long letter yourself," said Inez, holding out some notepaper towards him; "the exercise will be an excellent relief to your feelings."

"I am a dreadful bore," said Philip, smiling.

"You might be reading the marriage service," she said to him; "I have never known a man engaged to be married who did not read it."

"Do you know, I do not believe I have ever read it through seriously from beginning to end."

"It is quite amusing."

"The compromises and primitive theology of Queen Elizabeth's day are generally held to be 'sacred,'" he answered, laughing. "Personally, I believe that almost any two honest men of education and learning—say, if you like, an honest lawyer and a sound theologian of the Church—could compile a far better marriage service than we find in the book you have just made me read."

"I always like," said Inez dryly, "its exhortations to live after the example of confirmed polygamists!"

"Is it credible that they are accepted without a smile? And even suppose Abraham had not been a polygamist after the fashion of his time, what is a Hebrew sheik to me in these presumably more enlightened days, or I to him?"

"Imagine Abraham returning to earth and finding himself an example of what a husband and father and lover should be!"

"I rather like the quaint phraseology of the office, though!"

"So do I!"

"Oh, I am quite prepared to laugh at it; it was the sort of marriage service that one can imagine the wives of Henry the Eighth accepting. My only quarrel is with those who do not see the humour of it. I suppose the baptismal service is almost as quaint, isn't it?" he asked.

"Personally," she replied, "I would not promise for a child he should be good or well-behaved at a tea-party of an hour's duration, to which I took him; yet there can always be found three perfectly conscientious persons who will promise and vow that he shall renounce the devil and all his works—poor baby!—and many other things besides. And this, not for an hour or two, but, so far as I can gather, for the rest of his natural life!"

"I learned long ago," he said lightly, "that according to theologians an impossible promise made with devout intention, or a lie, were singularly acceptable offerings to the God of Truth."

"But no one is going to alter the phraseology of these old religious offices," she responded quickly. "Why, we might not be 'properly married' if we made a plain and honest promise of troth to each other."

"But why," he exclaimed, with a pretence of laughter, "should a woman promise to serve me and obey me when I with my next breath swear to worship her?"

"Why indeed?" said Inez lightly.

"Why should I hedge her round with these ir-

rational promises and bind her by contracts and conditions before I enjoy the inestimable privilege of calling her mine?"

Inez shrugged her shoulders. "When I read the laws and penalties relating to women, I am always amazed by their moderation."

"Because men framed the laws and penalties and can enforce them?"

"I have all sorts of stock arguments, but I am much too lazy to use them; besides, one is a little tired of them! Moral laws are primarily a matter of health; everything else is a matter of economics."

"Abstract justice," he began; but she interrupted him, saying:

"We are pretending not to be serious, you and I, Philip! But we are getting dangerously near to seriousness."

He laughed and said, "I am going to be married."

"To a believer?"

"If she believes," he cried joyously, "and I believe in her! Then, Inez, you must put me where you please—on the front bench of converts, if you like! My dear, there never was such an egoist as a man in love! Tell me I have talked long enough about Enid, and then expect me to begin again as though I had not wearied you twice over with my affairs."

The desire for sympathy which he felt was doubtless as egotistical as it was immature. Why must another rejoice because one is one's self happy? Or why should they weep because one is one's self

sad? Surely, only very youthful persons require those unreasonable considerations, or demand these fatuous outpourings on the part of their friends? Yet the feeling of disappointment was there, and it threw Philip with more passionate eagerness into the society of his betrothed. The days they spent together were like wanderings in some wonderful new undiscovered country. Every day brought fresh revelations; every day came new enchantments, and knowledge that was deeper and fuller than the knowledge of the day before mingled with eager questionings, whose answers, even when unexpected, blended perfectly in the harmony of love. Nothing discordant could be produced between two natures so perfectly in tune. Theories, modes of thought, beliefs even, might be as wide apart as the poles, but these differences never seemed in any sort barriers between them.

To Enid, her mind pulsating to transport with spiritual uplifting, divine pity for one who had not yet found the things so transcendently valuable to herself was fraught with a passionate desire to lead that one to the place where she herself stood. She had prayed that she might lead him to the feet of her Lord, and her prayer had been answered by a miracle! His wife's hand should guide him to God! Together they would come to Him, and remain for ever and for ever with Him in the beauty of His Presence, and in the perfect peace of His surrounding and enveloping love. Some day the heavenly

vision would burst upon him, and he would not be disobedient unto it.

Only last Sunday they had walked to the cathedral together through the misty September fields before the sun was risen, and together they had knelt under the vast carved roof. The time was the first since her illness that she had been so early abroad.

"You will come with me?" she had said when they had bidden each other good-night on the previous evening.

"I shall come!" he had replied, with her dear hands pressed to his lips.

The air was cold and sharp as they walked by the riverside in the early morning; great patches of hoarfrost lay upon the fields, and there was a feeling of keenness in the air, suggestive of brisk exercise rather than of contemplation, and a love of the natural world rather than of the inner sanctities.

The cathedral bells had ceased to chime when they entered, and the Dean was reading the commandments which Moses the Lawgiver had engraven on tablets of stone, not so very long ago, as we count the ages of the world. How primitive they sounded, how useful! And yet how inadequate to the higher needs of men their paucity and shortcomings seemed to the man who kneeled amongst the primly-set rush-bottomed chairs of the old church, his critical faculties keenly alive, and his mind wholly antagonistic to the formulæ of the

Church. "Thou shalt not add to nor take from any part of this Book," he quoted to himself. "Why, the Bible wants additions made to it every day! And there are men and women nowadays much more capable of writing an ethical or spiritual treatise than those Hebrews with their primitive notions of morality, and their horrible conceptions of God. What a drag to progress these old books would be, if any one really believed in their teaching! How insufficient were the things which the Dean was reading!"

Why should books be called inspired which dealt with battles of long ago, more or less accurately described? To idealise them required greater faith than he was capable of. And why these acrobatic efforts to get back to the primitive ages of men, and accept their statements as the last word in the vexed questions of right and wrong?

All round him, from a considerable congregation, consisting for the most part of women of the upper classes of life, he heard utterances of poignant humility and profound emotion piously uttered, but showing, perhaps, no correspondence to the genuine feelings of the worshippers in the church. Their repentance—if it were genuine at all—was for disobedience to some higher commandment than those which the Dean was reading now. This bugbear of sin, what a fetish it had become! What was sin after all but a natural heritage, the expiring ape and tiger nature in us all, and how far was religion going to help us out of it? Religion should be the

explanation of life rather than an added burden. Philip had travelled far and in many lands, and the result of his experience had been an emphatic negation of almost all forms and beliefs. His Hegelian studies had carried him farther than most other things had ever done, and memories of his Oxford days came back to him full of their boyish disputations, which had then seemed so profound—The thing and its other; dark the negation of light, but not its opposite; being and becoming, negations which superficially might be called evil, but which probably were the only proof we had of good. That again postulated the necessity of evil in the world. Bah! we were playing with dreams, and had far better just slip back into that cult of ignorance which was supposed to be pleasing to the Master Mind. It had always been so; the tree of knowledge was ever a forbidden tree. The desire of the people of the plains to reach to something higher than themselves is condemned for ever in an overturned tower and a jumble of languages. Lucifer himself falls from heaven through his desire to know, and Adam and Eve are banished from Paradise because they have tasted of the tree of Knowledge.

He rose from his knees and stood in an attitude of reverent attention during the chanting of the creed. His outward appearance was that of a deeply thoughtful man intent upon the service, and the regular beauty of his features had always something arresting in it. Inwardly his soul was in

arms. "Why were we always to substitute authority for reason?" he thought. "Was it the inevitable teaching of the world? Why this circuitous, barren style of teaching? Were we to remain children to the end of time, going on from authority to authority, till the meaning of the command was lost and authority itself was denied? God, if He existed at all, was Mind, and the more we had of Mind the more we had of Him, and the more we knew of Law the more we knew of Him. But people were still casting Copernicus out from their respectable midst for saying that the world was round, and sending Giordano Bruno to the stake because he cried out for coherence and intelligibility, taking his stand on truth, and seeking amidst the varying and contradictory phenomena of the universe for the eternal Unity which was to make all things plain. Job cries out from his heap of ashes, 'Is it on God's behalf that ye tell lies?' But still the religious believer with pious politeness is shutting doors and whispering outside, 'This is holy; you must not enter here.' To which the man of reason retorts, 'Were you sure that God was there you would open the door!' Reason was the highest form of faith, and belief was moral laziness. If there was a treasure anywhere, down on the earth, or down in hell for the matter of that, it warranted us to tear off the turf which had overgrown it, and to dig deep, even if our hands should bleed."

Beside him the woman who was to be his wife kneeled in lowliest fashion on the stones of the ca-

thedral floor. Here was a spirit caught up, held by something that was not in reason, not of this earth at all, but rather some untranslatable Word made into the likeness of a woman. He rose presently from his seat to make way for her to pass his chair as she went to the altar, and as she did so he took her hand as though to comfort and support her. Almost, it seemed to him, she was going into danger, and he could not come with her! If this Mystery of Mysteries were true, how dared man or woman approach it. He watched her trembling, as she passed up the aisle, and as he did so the early morning sunshine burst into a thousand lights from the eastern window in front of her. She seemed to come back to him in a robe of glory, the prismatic rays behind her head, and some heavenly light beaming from her face, making an aura round her, such as may have encircled the head of the Hebrew sheik when he came down from the mountain, having talked with God.

A fresh stream of love welled up in his heart, mingled with a profound joy in the girl's beauty—her beauty of feature, the exquisite beauty of her nature. To be near her was a prayer! To love her was in itself a religion! The church was nearly empty before she rose from her knees, and as they passed through the nave the two were alone. Her serene eyes were filled with love and rapture, and some emotion at which he could not even dimly guess. He took her hand. "I want to make my confession to you," he said, "here and now—my

confession of faith. . . . God is just the best that we know, something that is always higher than ourselves, and saves us from ourselves. You are my saviour, and I want no other! And all that a woman can make of a man you shall make of me!"

She bowed her head and made the sign of the cross. "Some day He will speak to you Himself," she said.

CHAPTER VIII

THE preparations for the wedding were hastened forward in order that Enid might spend the winter in Egypt. She was still delicate after her long illness, and at Malincourt the November mists hang heavily, and the air of the sleepy cathedral town is damp and chilly.

Egypt is the land of the dead. . . . Almost one can hear the wailing for the departed, dead so many hundred years ago, when the sun is low and the desert stretches in illimitable sadness under a burnished copper sky. The land is a land of graves, and over it hangs a mystery, a sense of eternity, and the everlasting peacefulness of those who sleep. Solemnly and with wistful sadness the old mysterious Nile flows through the desert sands, and wanders between the hills. Mournfully the boatmen's cries answer one another when the sun sinks behind temples where Moses walked, or Pharaoh lived in splendour. And still the light air breathes over the crumbling pillars, and the bees hum about the cool green fields of early clover, and the sun makes for itself a path on the waters when it bids the world good-night.

It is a land over which a certain majesty of sadness broods. And chiefest of its cities is modern

Cairo—modern, rather vulgar, jostling, tourist-riden Cairo, with its crowded hotels, its garish electric lights, its endless dinners, its smart women, and its uninterested men. Through the Mouski a steam tramcar runs, and dinner-parties are given in the shadow of the silent pyramids. The hotels are full of gossip, and gay parties of English men and women drive out to see the Sphinx by moonlight, and joke before the mystery of solitude that broods, almost like a sensible vapour, round the silent, splendid, inscrutable figure. The desert wind wails softly, and a great moon floods the silent land and the shoreless desert, with its soft-pacing camels and its long-robed sheiks. The longing of the unutterable is over everything, the wordless aching of a terrible desolation, the cry of something that is magnificent, rejected, misapprehended. But the gay visitor dances through the evening in the crowded hotels, buys with satisfaction Birmingham-made goods in the crowded bazaars, lays money on his pony at the races, and thanks God at the end of a day up the Nile that that's another temple done! His highest satisfaction is in the perusal of the English newspapers and telegrams; and he admits that the cooking at the hotel is not bad. His wife enjoys the dry climate and exemption from cold. She carries with her to the East all the gossip of London drawing-rooms, makes her sitting-room at the hotel as comfortable as possible with pretty things she has brought from England, flirts a little, perhaps, during the week, talks a good deal of scandal, and

goes to the English Church on Sunday. She may even be heard regretting to the chaplain that Egypt is still a heathen land, while the Arab behind her chair at dinner looks down with contempt upon her easy creed, her bare shoulders, and her indulgent husband.

Cairo was "fuller than ever," the society papers said, and it was a brilliant season from the English point of view. Never had such toilets been seen at the races, nor had table-d'hôte dinners, with their somewhat unpleasant odour of food, been more elaborate or more lengthy. Hotel-keepers reaped a handsome profit, and the dragomans showed to more visitors than usual the high-walled mosques of the city, with their canopy of blue sky above them, and the kneeling, linen-robed Arabs praying towards Mecca. Matrons were busy with guide-books, and youths with straw hats looked down upon dead Pharaoh lying in a glass case for the modern world to stare at, and called him a rum old chap.

The races had brought most of the visitors back to Cairo from their hurried journeys in post-boats and tourist steamers up the Nile. Solemn-faced Arabs, bowing to the swing of their camel's stride, made way on the hideous modern bridge for the stream of carriages going to Gerizeh; syces with lithe brown limbs, their jackets of scarlet and gold blazing in the sun, and the tassels of their tarouches swinging on their necks, ran before the carriage of some dignitary; while boys, with daz-

zling white teeth and clad in blue linen dresses, sold race-cards to the passers-by.

In a small society, bent for the most part on holiday-making, and with a good deal of leisure, it is natural that one topic of conversation should be made to go far; and, where interests are few, curiosity is naturally sharpened. The visitors at Cairo employed much of their many spare hours in discussing the arrival of Sir Philip and Lady Gurney. Enid's life had been lived so far from the world that the world knew nothing of her. No one at Cairo had ever heard of her before, and people wove romantic stories about her. She had run away from a convent; she had been on the stage. Her beauty was of the conspicuous order of things which renders escape from observation impossible. But Philip was well known, and introductions to his wife were eagerly sought for. A life of seclusion at Malincourt was not the best education for one who was expected to play the part of the most admired woman in Cairo. Invitations and cards were showered upon the bride, and homage was freely offered to her. The very maids on the staircase of the hotel jostled each other to get a peep at her as she went downstairs; and an American lady announced that she had pursued her into one of the tombs of the kings, and had then bade her dragoman light up the place with a magnesium light that she might have a good look at her.

And Philip said, "I believe you dislike all this sort of thing as much as I do. Hospitality has run

riot where you are concerned, and we never have a moment to ourselves. Let us get away from hotels, and Nile steamers, and friendly matrons, and admiring strangers. The world is before us, and every place is a paradise except where they will not leave us to each other."

India was talked of, the Riviera, the Cape. It was early springtime now; almost any of these places would be pleasant for a sojourn before it would be warm enough to return home. Guide-books and maps were consulted, trains and hotels were discussed.

"I don't believe it ever strikes the people here," said Philip one day, "that we are only a few hours' journey from Palestine and Syria."

"Philip!"

"But it is so," he said; and, seeing the quick flush of pleasure on her face, "You would like to go there?" he added.

"I do not know anything," she said, "that I should like so much."

"We will travel with our own people," he said, "and leave this tedious city which they have made so like an Earl's Court Exhibition. We will go away, and forget the dinner-parties and the bands; and there will be just you and me travelling alone through Palestine with our tents and our servants. I believe," he continued, turning and smiling at her—"I believe you, Enid, would like to make your pilgrimage there with no servants and with bare feet!"

Her face was lit with pleasure, and her cheeks, too delicate and thin since her illness, showed red where the blood had mounted to them with happy anticipation. All night she dreamed of the road to Jericho, and the cornfields about Jerusalem, and the city of Bethany where Mary and Martha abode, and the stones on the shore of the Lake of Galilee which the feet of the Saviour had trod.

Ah, the wonderful new experience that it proved! The dash through the surf at Joppa. The first actual halt in the Holy Land, when she sat on the roof of Simon's house, where Peter fell asleep. The reality of it—the sense of solid historical reality, and the wonder and the pleasure too. What joy it was to pluck the great ripe oranges in the gardens; to drive to Ramleh, the possession of Dan; to roam with Philip among the grass-grown aisles of the Crusaders' Cathedral; to sleep in the plain, clean little German inn; and then, almost before the sun was up, to wake and to know that to-day her feet would tread the streets of Jerusalem—Jerusalem, the City of God!

"Lord, come quickly, come quickly!" she said with a sort of rapture as she sat in a shabby hired carriage driving towards Jerusalem. The bright-green fields were all about her; stones covered most of them, while here and there on the hillsides they were raked together to form terraces for the vineyards. It is a landscape of soft greys and greens—silver-grey hills and green fields, flower-enamelled, through which peace flows as a river. The solitary,

quiet hillsides, the pure air, and the soft skies seem suitable to a land of simple faith and a pastoral people with the eye of God always upon them, and the everlasting arms beneath them. The religion of the children of Israel was never a complicated one, nor perhaps a religion of great hopes, but they knew and loved a just God, who made the showers to fall gently and the rivers to flow sweetly and the skies to be soft and grey, and who, when He was angry, shook the heavens with thunders or withheld the blessed rain. They knew and loved a just and ever-present Deity who did righteously and hated iniquity, who loved to bless and not to curse. Nature with its mysteries and its beauty was their teacher, solitude was possible and not terrible, and, as in most hill countries, loneliness made for mysticism, and mysticism was interpreted by spiritual ideas.

Still the sunshine rests on the fields of Palestine, and broods over the silver-grey hills with their patches of living green. And up and up the steep road to Jerusalem journeyed a man and a woman who loved each other with no common love, whose hearts beat as one, while their minds were divided by an impassable gulf, and whose beliefs and hopes and aspirations showed a difference at which they as yet had hardly even guessed.

At sundown they entered Jerusalem and drove to the commonplace hotel, filled with commonplace tourists who had arrived that afternoon by train. Dragomans jostled each other in the hall, ladies

were busy buying olive-wood ornaments and dried flowers gathered on some site of religious interest, and vendors of beads and crucifixes were selling them to passers-by. Cook's tourists, dissenting ministers, travellers with light luggage which did not presumably include a change of linen, crowded in the hall of the hotel. There were dirty beggars about the door, and a tourists' office across the way. Elderly men travelling with their families contested items on their bills at the hotel bureau, and young girls in sun-hats busied themselves with sketch-blocks and note-books.

Enid neither saw nor heard what was going on about her; she drew towards the window of the hotel sitting-room, and flung it open and looked out over the city and the distant hills. Philip followed her; he was disgusted with the crowd and the noise downstairs, and he had expected to find disappointment on his wife's face. She turned towards him and her eyes were radiant and shone through a dimness of tears.

"Even if they make mistakes about the sites sometimes," she exclaimed, "one knows that those are the very hills that He must have looked at, and to which David raised his eyes and gained strength!"

He bent his head—both of them were unusually tall—and laid his lips upon hers. "My love," he said, "was ever a heart as beautiful as yours?"

And the next day she was all eagerness to begin their journeyings about Jerusalem. Philip, who

was always an early riser, was glad of an excuse for seeing something of the place before the rush of the tourists should begin, and early the following morning they began their pilgrimage as in modern times such a pilgrimage is made. Their dragoman was waiting for them in the hall below, ready to begin his rapid account of every building that they passed. He was a fine-looking fellow in his Syrian dress, and Philip, who had wished to make the tour of the city without him, found it impossible to get rid of beggars and importunate persons except with his assistance. Enid eagerly accepted his information, and a long morning was spent in walking from place to place in the somewhat narrow confines of the city.

The sun shone on the mellow stones of the Church of the Nativity, on the stricken beggars exposing their miseries or their wounds, on the vendors of beads and trinkets, and on hurrying tourists with guide-books and gauze veils. Within, the place seemed filled with pious exaggerations, dream-drawn wonders of a mediæval faith. Here was the very site which Queen Helena had discovered by a vision; and if Queen Helena has been proved hopelessly at variance with any possible facts, her discoveries have at least been a source of satisfaction to thousands of simple, faithful hearts. An easily persuaded piety lingers round these historically impossible sites. But what need to say this to a woman whose very gaze was full of rapture, for whom each step was a sacred joy? The nuns in the

convent kissed her hands, and some of the children whispered, "She is the Madonna." The Sisters showed her some needlework which they sold for the financial needs of the convent, and Enid loosed a purse of netted gold from her belt and pressed it into their hands. "Ah, you are very blessed," she said to them in the French tongue which they used; "you live so near Him here."

"I had much rather," thought Philip, "deprive a living man of the light than deprive her of her faith."

And so the happy days passed. For him the smell of the narrow streets, the dirty beggars, the garden of Gethsemane, pitifully tawdry with its glass cases and artificial flowers, its trim paths, its tree of agony, used as an advertisement for a guide-book, might seem little short of shocking; to her each step was holy ground.

It was a relief to leave Jerusalem and its dark hotel, and drive down through the sweet silver country to Jericho. Here, fictitious sites were still common enough, but the beauty and charm of the country were inextinguishable. The wild gorge through which the brook of Cherith runs, with its rocky, precipitous sides, the shepherds in their quaint garments of camel's hair, the footsore pilgrims trudging bravely, the wells by the roadside, the old aqueduct of Herod, and the wonderful plain of Jericho, were rich in interest. Here, at least, when they halted at midday it was possible to wander out on the hillside, away from tourists and

dragomans, with their exhaustless fund of information or their insatiable desire for it. Here, too, he could see his wife's face turn towards himself, not towards the mythical prophet whose journeys were made a source of revenue to tourists' agencies. And, wandering out on the old grass-grown road that leads to Jericho, the strain and excitement and emotionalism of the past week seemed relaxed. The hush of the hills wrapt them about very gently, the bees hummed above the wild thyme and the anemones, and the soft sky smiled kindly overhead. They looked back at Jerusalem, the City of David, and almost the tragedy of the place was forgotten. The fierce cries, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" were not heard so plainly, and that piously desecrated garden which beheld His midnight agony, His loneliness, the desertion of His friends, and His tears appeared simply a place where He had loved to wander, and whose beauty may have often been refreshing to Him.

They journeyed on, talking of many things. Away from the ever-present tragedy of Jerusalem, it seemed less impossible than it had been of late to speak of everyday affairs, of their future life, their plans for the coming summer, and all the other thousand happy interests of those who are beginning their wedded lives together. Looking down the brook Cherith they had spoken of Malincourt, and, even with Jericho in sight, some letters of last week had been read in the carriage and discussed. The dragoman in his picturesque Syrian dress, sit-

ting on the box of the carriage, turned round from time to time, and in a perfunctory manner made quotations from the Bible, and asked them to guess antiquated English riddles which had evidently been offered to him by previous parties of English tourists with a turn for humour in its more primary aspect. A handsome young fellow in picturesque garments, a sword by his side, rode beside the carriage. He was a youth of one of the Bedouin tribes, whom it is the custom to send with travellers on this road to Jericho as a protection against Bedouin marauders, who still claim the old pass through the hills as their own. His clanking sword and fine dress, his Arab horse, and his perfect seat in the saddle gave a charming air of unusualness and romance to a drive where every incident of the road was a fresh pleasure.

Philip laughed as he sat alone that evening on the balcony of the little hotel. "This has been the happiest day of all," he said to himself. "Is it possible that I am growing jealous of a dead prophet?"

He turned at the sound of his wife's footstep in the room behind him, and Enid came out on to the balcony of the small hotel. Her grey dress bore no stains of travel upon it; even the dust of the road seemed to have but little sullying effect upon her. Her cool white hands lay crossed upon her lap, and she leaned back in the chair which her husband brought from within the room for her, in an attitude of perfect pleasure and repose. The wester-

ful hills where the Israelites once journeyed, where Elisha lived, and where Christ spent forty days alone. Eastward lay Jordan and the Dead Sea, in front of them a tiny green garden, a spot of verdure in a "proud-souled" city, cursed long years ago.

"I think," said Enid, "that in all my life I shall never want to travel anywhere again; nothing can ever be a greater pleasure than Palestine."

"You are like the people in the Highlands," Philip said, smiling in delightful sympathy with her happiness, "when they have drunk the best health of the evening they break their glasses and drink no other."

"Let us break our glasses after this, Philip," she said, "and let us never make another journey that might destroy the memory of this one."

"Has it been such a happy time to you?" he asked, with a lover's wish to have these assurances repeated again and yet again.

"I have always had more than my share of happiness, I am afraid," said Enid; "but that is hardly a fair way to put it, is it?" she said quickly. "I mean, the amount of happiness in the world is not limited; one does not deprive others of their share by having a great deal oneself. It is not so, is it, Philip?"

These dear difficulties of hers always touched him profoundly, and her appeal to his judgment made him shrink instinctively from making any answer that would give her the smallest hurt. "No, my dearest, no," he said; "there is no limit to happi-

ness, none to yours and mine, none to that of the whole world. I never knew it before, but I do know it now."

"Some people seem so much afraid of happiness," she said; "but unless one were depriving someone else of his share of it, why should it make one afraid? I do not think that any trouble can touch us, for even death could not deprive us of one another. I should love you just as deeply and well were you in the spirit world and I here; and in heaven itself I should always be waiting at the gate for you, so that I might be the first to welcome you there."

Some quick repudiation of her fancy rose to his lips, but remained unuttered. Where was this heaven, he said to himself, with its material gates, of which she talked so simply? In what planet were the streets of gold, and how was a body conveyed thither? Where was that soul situated whose life was eternal, whose eternity had begun? Anatomists had never discovered it. Ethics, the science of right and wrong, the necessary laws which must develop amongst gregarious people, why should that have become magnified into a giant superstition?

The Mount of Temptation rose before him with its monastery and its hermits' caves. The season was Lent, and the Christian world was commemorating it in its own curious way—by a number of irritating little laws which emphasized and over-estimated food and raiment—that quiet time spent by a thoughtful Teacher amongst the hills before

beginning His ministry. At home, in all the churches, they were singing dolorous hymns, adding pious glosses to the story of that calm time—troops of Midian, prowling beasts, bodily flights to the Temple's utmost pinnacle. But who in all that world saw the story in its helpful, its simple side, or who imitated their Lord by retiring to some solitary place, where with all care for the flesh set aside they might think and gain strength by uninterrupted communion with the Unseen?

The story of the Temptation, how hazily it was interpreted, how little it was understood! He thought Christians, for the most part, were unconscious blasphemers, capable only of grasping the material side of things, childishly anxious—in Jerusalem, at least—to fix upon some historic site in a city which has known the upheaval of war and siege, and in which not one stone was left upon another. Mentally, he was trying to arrange an immense complication of facts and to divorce them from fancies. His mind, trained to scientific criticism by the strictest method, was eager with historical evidence and sharp refutation of fable. He had written some notable articles, declining Christian apologetics, exposing superstitions, and now, note-book in hand, he had gathered material for another attack. But his wife was treading her pilgrim way beside him, faithful and serene, her face ever turned towards a heavenly city, and he tore his notes into fragments and scattered them abroad. Nothing in all the world mattered, save that he

and she loved each other. Historical evidence, and reason even, might go to the wind like these scattered fragments of paper! Elias might be Helios, or he might be an aged preacher going up in a material chariot of fire to heaven; the prophets and poets and writers of drama might be left to take care of themselves; historic records of tens of thousands slain might be inspired or not; but the Resurrection should remain a great historical fact in the presence of a sweet believer, who turned loving eyes upon him and said, "It seems to me so natural. It had to happen."

Night fell gently on the lonely plain, and in the late evening he wandered out for a stroll, waking all the dogs in the place as he did so. She, left alone, began to wonder at his absence and to exaggerate its length, began to have fears for him and then for herself. The place was so isolated and so still, and they two appeared to be the only guests in a little annexe of the rough hotel. Some womanish terror, very unusual with her, made her go out on the little wooden balcony of their room and call out "Philip, Philip," in the darkness. He came almost on her call, throwing away his cigar as he mounted the crazy outside staircase, and asking her what was her need. As she clung to him she begged forgiveness for her foolish fears, and then, with the sweet abandonment of a young wife, she pleaded her dependence upon him, entreating him not to leave her, for that she must have his care.

The little incident touched him profoundly. The

disturbance of her usual calm, her clinging arms and unexplained fear, caused him not only to redouble his tenderness, but moved him to a passionate loyalty towards her.

"There was no need for fear," he told her; "the place, for all its roughness, was perfectly safe, and if she wished it he would see that the dragoman slept below."

She began to smile at her fancies, which had been real enough; and he, who loved to play Providence to her timidity, hardly wished that it should be too soon soothed. His only half-defined and already repudiated jealousy of the things which belonged to her soul was dismissed with triumphant scorn. Once she would have prayed to be kept from the perils and dangers of the night, now she laid her clinging hand in his. Well, even the jealous God could not resent a wife's devotion to her husband!

The next day dawned cool and clean and fresh. There was no hurry in this pleasant touring; a tranquil morning was spent in a stroll to Elisha's pool, and in the afternoon they drove along the rough track across the plain to the Dead Sea. Through the wide valley Jordan flows to the sea; to the west rose the mountains of Judaea; and far away could be dimly discerned the tower outside Jerusalem, which marks the Mount of Olives.

Bible in hand, Enid read eagerly Old Testament stories and New Testament parables. The quiet country was all about them: it only varied in the tones of the same colour. The waters of the Dead

Sea were a delicate green-grey, the hills round about were a softer shade, and the sky above them was one arch of splendid burnished silver. It was a landscape such as one might see in a dream, and through dream-clouds—a loving, peace-blessed land. And so they journeyed to the river Jordan, where trees were green with the freshness of early springtime, where reeds, shaken by the wind, whispered, and long peaceful reaches of water were fringed with tasselled bushes.

Enid trailed her fingers through the rippling stream, and Joseph, the dragoman, who considered that a certain programme ought invariably to be followed, offered to boil a bottle full of the water for her to take home.

What a banal idea! How horribly suggestive of tourists! Philip was surprised to hear his wife say eagerly, "Yes, yes, I should like to take it!" Even the refreshment booths beside the river failed to offend her, and the hackneyed programme of the day's proceedings had brought a light of perfect happiness to her eyes.

And the next day was Sunday, and there was nothing to do but to enjoy the serenity of the place, and to wander upon the hillside amongst the sweet-smelling thyme, to sit on the balcony of the hotel, answer some English letters, and read the English church service for the day.

"You will let me read it to you?" asked Enid, when he came and sat beside her as she was opening her Prayer Book.

"I will 'let' you read me anything in the wide world," he said, "for I know no greater pleasure than to hear your voice!"

"But—" began Enid.

"But," he said gently, "the story, as you know it, is not the same to me as it is to you."

He avoided discussion as much as possible on such subjects, but the Gospel of Palestine with American tourists, and illustrated guide-books, and would-be pious dragomans, had given him an extraordinary distaste for the orthodox theology of the modern world.

"I know, I know," his wife was saying eagerly; "you don't quite realise it yet; but not to realise is not unbelief."

"You are very merciful," he said, laying his hand in hers.

"Must we go back to Jerusalem?" he said on the following day; "must we leave this place at all?"

"We have not been to Bethlehem yet," said Enid.

"And you wish to go there?"

"I wish it very much."

So it was over the hills again on Monday, and back to the orphaned city, set like a jewel amongst the mountains, and filled with pilgrims and beggars, and traversed by evil-smelling streets. They drove out to Mount Scopas, whence the city looks a heavenly one. The sinking sun was turning every dome and minaret to pure gold, and the Turkish soldiery beat their tattoo from King David's tower, and shouted for the Sultan. A group of America tour-

ists, arriving at the spot where they stood to enjoy the view, brought guide-books and camp-stools with them. They took a comprehending and rapid view of the city, listening eagerly to the dragoman's rapid dissertations, and then hastened on to see something else. And the following day, at Bethany, the sight-seeing still continued, and as they groped their way down a long flight of dark steps to the tomb of Lazarus, the shrill-voiced Americans were again upon them.

"Is it possible," said Philip, when they returned to the hotel that evening, "that we also are tourists? One can hardly believe that one is of the same genus as those terrible people who have been haunting our steps lately!"

"That poor American lady," said Enid, laughing, "she is nearly breathless with sight-seeing; and she told me to-day that doing Europe in eight weeks had already tired her very much."

Philip laughed. "Tell me," he said, "what excuse you can find for the party of Dissenters from Chicago who have presumably left their linen at home, and who break eggs into glasses."

"I had not noticed them," she answered, smiling.

"They dogged our footsteps in the Temple the other day," said Philip, "and they have been gathering olive leaves as mementoes under our very noses for some time past."

"You haven't made friends with my poor curate yet," she said with a touch of gaiety. "I mean the one who sits next me at dinner. Just think, Philip,

he has saved up his money for ten years in order to make this trip."

"Did he tell you so? They all seem to tell you their stories and their troubles. Do you know, Enid," he said suddenly, "that you could be fascinating and popular if you liked, but you have chosen instead to be lovable above all other women! I know you want me to do something for the curate with the slender purse; what is it to be? An Englishman can never think of anything but to ask a man to dine."

A drive was suggested, for carriage hire was expensive, and might be prohibitive to a poor man. "We might ask him to come with us to Bethlehem to-morrow," Philip said.

"I must go there with you alone," she said quickly; "another day let us ask him to drive with us."

He thought he had hardly realised before his wife's universal charm. She had appealed so entirely to his own sense of beauty and grace and distinction that he had hardly known how entirely she would please others, except at Cairo, where a somewhat banal world had sought to flatter her by making her popular. The young clergyman, with his professional enthusiasm and his parochial smile, who joined them in an expedition the following morning, paid her unconscious homage in almost every word that he uttered, and her sympathy drew forth the best in a man whom at first Philip was fain to vote a bore.

He wrote home to his sister that night, and in the reply which he received from her Mrs. Bretherton said: "Have you really lost all sense of humour? To think of you in the Holy Land—please mark that I call it the Holy Land—driving in a hired carriage with a mediæval saint (she really is a saint, and quite the most beautiful woman in England), and a curate, is wonderfully droll! Is Saul also among the prophets?"

The air was cold the following day, and a curious sharp wind, such as is not uncommon in the hill country of Palestine, swept over the town. The wind and the strange rarefied atmosphere have an effect upon the nerves of travellers, and in Jerusalem the most restrained natures will give way sometimes to a demonstration of feeling such as their piety never provoked in them before. The Jews themselves, wailing by the city wall every Friday afternoon, and passionately kissing its stones, seem almost less singular than the excitable tourists, many of them suffering from the insomnia which the air produces, and full of emotion.

Philip ascribed the prevailing sense of exaltation to climatic influences. He habitually disliked a display of unrestrained feelings, more particularly when it showed itself in the sentimentality of visitors to those historic sites whose authenticity was doubtful.

But at Bethlehem the impatience even of a sceptic may be changed to something of divinest pity, if not to sympathy. Enid laid her hand upon his arm,

and the emotion which she was feeling seemed to pass in a wave through him.

"They were so poor," she murmured, "and no one seemed to care about them. The angels were singing to each other, and calling out, 'He is born! He is born!' But the world seemed to care so little; perhaps only His mother really knew and understood."

"You must not stay here too long," he said, in distress for her too sensitive imagination; "come out into the open air, and let us see the little town."

The sight of the overwrought, tired pilgrims, with their carefully-tended pilgrims' candles kept always burning, touched Philip's humanity. What were they here for? What had they come out to see? A reed shaken by the wind, a grey landscape! But what had they come out to see? A baby lying in a stable, or their own selves in the light of a mystery!

Their poverty and fatigue seemed to him infinitely pathetic, and he half expected to see a look of pity for them on his wife's face when he turned to speak to her; but the history of the place was absorbing her every thought, and to her the praying pilgrims were kissing the cradle of her Redeemer.

He was conscious of a sense of relief when they left the building and came into the sunshine again. Outside the church there were the usual numbers of sellers of beads and trinkets; and the heavy air bespoke the overcrowding, in a small place, of thousands of pilgrims, possessing not even elementary

knowledge of the laws of health, yet daily surprised when disease broke out amongst them.

When they wandered further down the hillside, and were seated in the carriage on their homeward journey, his wife turned to him, and said, "Will you tell me something about the time when you were a boy, Philip? and tell me a great deal about your mother."

"You know that it is a sad story," he said gravely; "I told you about it before we were married—and—"

She laid her hand upon his lips. "But I don't want to hear about the sad part, beloved, I want you to tell me how she folded you in her arms when you were a little fellow, and how much she cared for you, and how much you loved her."

"I loved her so much," he said, "that for years I have tried to forget. When Inez married, as you know, a present came with no name upon it, which we always think must have been sent by her; and that ring I showed you, that was sent to me, must have come from the same hand; we cannot help thinking that she hears of us, but of her we have no sign."

"When you were little," she said gently, leading the topic to remoter days, "did she play with you, and run with your hand in hers about the garden?"

"Why, yes!" he said, and a smile came with the recollection. "We used even to go birds' nesting together; I never wanted to have anything, I believe, unless I could show it to her."

"And the children—the little sisters, I mean, who are younger than you are—do you remember ever seeing her carry them in her arms, and holding them quite close to her when they were tired or weeping? Do you remember her looking at their toys and little shoes, when they were growing bigger, as if she wanted to have the baby days back again?"

"It was just like that," he said. "I think you see her just as she was, loving nothing in the world so much as she loved her children. I do not think she had a thought beyond them; certainly not a selfish thought. She was a curiously simple-hearted woman, too, and quite satisfied with her garden and her flowers, her house, and those homely occupations which one hears are somewhat despised nowadays, but in her they seemed very lovely. And then she was so full of a delightful gaiety too; I believe a dinner-party of country friends was a real pleasure to her, and the coming and going of guests, the arrangement of their rooms and plans for their enjoyment were a pleasure too. I suppose she would not nowadays be considered an intellectual woman, but to us children that could hardly have been considered a disadvantage. Do you really like hearing about her? It is so long since I talked of those old days that they seem very far away, but I like you to know that it is just those days that I think of when I think of her. Everything else is forgotten. I only remember how she used to kiss me when I went back to school, and the little sur-

prises I used to find in my box when it was unpacked, to help me through the home-sickness of the first night." He paused for a moment, and in her mute caress he seemed to get renewed consciousness of his wife's understanding love for him. "When she left us," he went on, "I spent a whole year in search of her; it was a boyish quest, perhaps not very intelligently performed, and it was quite hopeless. And then I got her letter begging me to give up the search. I don't even know her name; it is certainly not that of the man with whom she left her home."

"Was it very lonely after that for you?" she said.

"It was absolute solitude," he said, "until I met you. Solitude of thought, solitude of life, and of occupation, until that day in the cathedral when you looked up to find God, and saw me instead."

"Some day," said Enid, "I know that I shall meet her, and she will tell me all about you and her love for you, and all the things she felt when first she knew what it was to have a little son."

The air was getting cooler now as they drove homewards in the early dusk towards Jerusalem. The fields looked chilly and grey about them, a pale star hung low in the heavens, and the distant lights of the city shone ruddy and homelike in the half light. Rachel's, the young mother's, tomb was sharp cut against the sky; far away was the hill where Herod had his palace; and nearer to the city appeared the tomb of Solomon.

The air was very cold now, and Philip wrapped

his wife in a fur cloak, feared that she was tired, and bade her rest when they should return to the hotel.

"I have been talking of my mother," he said, "and forgetting how the time slipped away."

"But I wanted to hear about her," said Enid eagerly; "I wanted to hear all that mothers say and think about." She covered his hand with hers as it lay upon his knee, and turned her face full of a new light, an exquisite joy, to his, "I wanted to tell you," she said, . . . "I have been to Bethlehem—" Her disjointed sentences broke into a little happy sob.

He turned and looked at her, his face breaking into a smile in which tenderness, anxiety, love, and joy were mingled—"Unto us," he said softly, "a child!"

CHAPTER IX

MRS. BRETHERTON came to call upon her brother and his wife when they had settled in London, and she announced her intention of but seldom repeating the visit.

"Newly-married people are wholly impossible," she said emphatically; "those who have high ideals about love are a particularly trying species, and of course when they contemplate anything so unique and extraordinary as having a little family, they are more than usually tiresome. We don't live so close to each other," she said in her bright, hard way to Philip, "that we must meet daily. Fortunately our front doors are not in view of each other, and I shall not take that keen interest in the number of your callers which relatives living near one another in London seem to find so absorbing."

"I hoped we might have seen much of you, dear Inez," said Enid. Her heart went out to the solitary woman with the unattractive manner, and she had hoped with that boundless loving-kindness, which was the mainspring of her life, that she might have been some comfort to her sister-in-law, especially at such times as her son was at school.

"Frankly," said Inez, "I find Philip's drawing-

room depressing; it makes me feel as though I were in church."

Philip laughed a little uncomfortably, and admitted that the light was dim, and that his sixteenth-century chairs were not particularly ease-giving.

"You know I hate darkness," said Inez, "and personal comfort—chairs of the pouf order and good food are some of the few mitigations we have of a rather unpleasant existence."

Mrs. Bretherton's drawing-room was in somewhat strange contrast to her own personal lack of beauty and her severity of outline. Its deeply-upholstered satin chairs with down cushions piled upon them, its sofas and mirrors and laces, its tables covered with silver trinkets and novels, was rather the abode of a frivolous woman of fashion than of one who, having weighed most experiences of life and found them wanting in joy, or even in interest, had set herself down with a philosophic desire to make the best of a bad business.

"I have not been 'given' much, to use a pious phrase," she used to say, "so I help myself to what I can. I have a mad husband and a son who will probably—" her lips refused to frame the words, and she bit her lips and broke off with a shrug—"well, these things are hereditary. . . . I am not beautiful nor charming, but I have money, and I spend it on exactly what pleases me; and I have wit enough to command admiration when it suits me to do so. If sin appealed to me as pleasure I should doubtless sin, but, as a matter of fact, I believe that

no reasonable being can wish to evade laws, and no one above the average brute can really enjoy what is gross or greedy or purely vile."

Mrs. Bretherton's house was a popular one, and with that genius which she possessed for amassing anything she liked, she had gathered round her a clever literary and artistic set of people. These she believed to be the salt of the earth, in so far as this purifying agent existed in the world. She listened, with more patience than she was wont to show to anyone else, to the somewhat egotistical conversation of her tame writers, artists, and musicians, and was hardly tickled by their ingenuous self-praise. With all her shrewdness Mrs. Bretherton was very easily imposed upon by the affectations of young genius; it was perhaps her one weakness, and she was blissfully unconscious of it. The most impudent verse maker or bad-mannered scribbler of unacted plays was easily forgiven his gaucheries, and was indeed believed by her to be interesting because of them.

She returned from her rather perfunctory visit to the head of her house, and entered her drawing-room, throwing off her light cloak on to a chair, and then settled herself luxuriously by the fire, for the spring days were still chilly, and her rooms were always the perfection of comfort. The latest books were upon the table, the wall-paper was bright and cheerful, while the sofa was piled with cushions, and the warmth of the room brought out a hundred

odours from delicate spring flowers massed everywhere in vases and pots.

She took from a drawer in a table near her a bundle of proof-sheets, and glanced half furtively at them, keeping the drawer still open beside her, as though she might at any moment have to conceal the papers in a hurry.

"At least they are me," she said, smiling slightly, and scanning the verses in front of her, "and so, with all their faults, I suppose they are sincere—that is, if one is any judge of one's own work, which I am inclined to doubt. We think we are very sensible about ourselves, and we may indeed have a perfectly just appreciation of our name, our position, our appearance, or our character. But when we have given off something from ourselves, we are as little able to get outside it as we are able to get outside what we believe to be our most subtle emotions. The thing we have produced is more distinctly our own than the very faculties that have produced it. And yet in the presence of our own offspring, whether it be a child, a picture, or a book, judgment is suspended, criticism stands aside, and our perceptions lose themselves in dim groping and in impotent desire for a clearer vision." She lay back in her chair and pushed the printed pages back into the drawer, and then produced from a gold-fretted bag at her side a letter written in a cramped, blotted, schoolboy hand. "It is possible, for instance," she said to herself, "that other people might not be able to see that this letter is the dear-

est that the post has brought to London this morning." She read the letter and put it back into her bag, and the old shadow fell across her face. "He is even beginning to write very much as his father did—well, I shall enjoy him while I have him, but I am a fatalist about these matters."

She went and dressed in one of her usual sumptuous gowns, and her motor car took her to dine at a house where politicians talked confidentially to her, and play-writers revealed the plots of their forthcoming plays to her, and society flattered her. "And I am a woman," thought Inez complacently, "quite astonishingly plain, with a bad manner, and without the protection that a husband is supposed to afford. Well, I have triumphed in spite of all this, and now I mean to earn fame—why not? I believe in success!"

Her hostess came and sat down beside her after dinner, and said, "A woman is always supposed to hate another woman if she is better dressed than herself—personally, there is nothing I like so much as good dressing at my parties. May I tell you that you are looking very splendid and delightful?"

"You may tell me so," said Inez, "but you must not expect me to regard it in the light of a compliment. It is really no merit on my part to get inside a piece of brocade and old lace, and trail it about after me."

"It is distinctly a merit," said Mrs. Paulett. "I give myself grey hairs over choosing my dresses,

and they are all hideous, whereas you never seem to make a mistake."

"I am sufficiently plain," said Mrs. Bretherton, "to gain a reflected glory from my clothes. But one should be beautiful, you know, like Philip's wife, whose dresses always seem to me delicately subservient to her own personality."

"I have not seen her yet," said Mrs. Paulett, "but what a sensation she seems to have made at Cairo! Is she going to appear? I mean, is she going to do anything and entertain, and be like other people, or must one really believe that she is going to live the life of a mediæval saint in your brother's sixteenth-century house? The idea is distinctly picturesque, but, if one may say so, just a little dull!"

"It is too artistic to be dull," said Mrs. Brether-ton frankly. "Enid has made the library as dim in colour as the drawing-room, and she has a private chapel where her priest says prayers three times a day, just as at Malincourt."

"That is a little fanatical, is it not?" said Mrs. Paulett.

"In any other woman it would be fanatical," admitted Inez, "but in Enid I consider it simply the highest expression of emotional feeling. She and her husband are living in some world of their own, where he worships his wife only, while he respects her devotions made at a very artistic shrine."

"Romantic," acquiesced Mrs. Paulett, "but hardly safe! I am always sorry when I see young

married people beginning their lives together on the highest pinnacle of feeling: the atmosphere is so horribly rarefied on mountain tops, and yet the descent into pleasanter and more sheltered valleys is generally regarded as something in the light of a disappointment or a fall."

"And a fall means a smash very often, does it not?" said Mrs. Bretherton. "So let us leave them on the top of Mount Olympus—or the Mount of Transfiguration, do they call it?—as long as possible——"

"Meanwhile the pose is very charming," said Mrs. Paulett, "and excellently mounted, you say?"

"Playing the organ in Philip's great, dark drawing-room, living on pulse——"

"Do they live on pulse, Inez?"

"They live very plainly," said Mrs. Bretherton—"working for the poor—such horrible work, in the very slummiest of slums! 'Raising the tone' of thieves and women of the lowest orders, by letting them impose upon her. In Enid's condition, to work as she does, and in such surroundings, is simply insane. But my beautiful sister-in-law is perfectly consistent. She has a convenient Fetish whom she worships, a Being who 'overrules' everything if one is sufficiently importunate in one's requests to Him!"

"Hence the chapel?"

"Yes, and a tonsured priest to assist in moving this Deity to reverse His own laws. My dear, let

us be thankful that we have chosen good dinners, electric lights, and something a little more human, a little more amusing than asceticism."

It is perhaps scarcely possible for dwellers in comfortable valleys to realise how much easier it is for some natures to breathe the rarefied atmosphere of the mountain tops. There was scarcely any one of Lady Gurney's friends, or of the new acquaintances who called upon her, who did not feel vaguely sorry for one who, with beauty and position and a fortune so large that hardly any of the wishes of the world were beyond its power to purchase, elected to live as austere as she did. Those who regard prayer either as an irksome duty, or at best as a charm against ills, can never quite realise what it may mean for one who, from childhood, has lived in direct personal communion with divine things. The want of effort with which she prayed, the glowing pleasure of it, the deep sanctifying reverence that hallowed it, and the uplifting joy of it—were things of which, perchance, they hardly dreamed. To be in the Divine Presence in hours of solitude in the chapel, or by the prayer desk in her own room, were the centre of a life of great beauty.

Cabs and carriages rolled by in the street outside: they could be dimly heard within the chapel room; motor-cars, with their busy fussing and hoarse, warning note, sped down the broad street scattering foot-passengers with reckless unconcern; shop-boys

whistled and sang as they clattered down the area steps for orders; rain and mud and fog might prevail outside, but the cloistered life was not easily disturbed by outward things.

CHAPTER X

To the materialistic, the ordinary, unidealising mind that lacks the talisman that is to make all things fair and lovely, there are many scenes and situations in this life which are unlit by golden gleams of poetic sunshine, and are singularly unlovely, not to say sordid, in their aspect. Perhaps one may class amongst these hopelessly ugly scenes, in its outward semblance at least, a Mothers' Meeting in the East End of London. It is altogether ugly unless one can bring (and the effort is sometimes both difficult and ignominiously unsuccessful) this radiating sunlight to bear upon it, this talisman that is to make all things fair and lovely out of common materials.

Liverpool Street Station on a wet November day is insistently ugly, with an obtrusive, genuine, unrelieved ugliness which forces itself upon our notice, even when we are preoccupied or would fain overlook it. The journey to Bethnal Green does not disclose one single object of beauty on the route, and weary eyes sometimes turn restlessly to look upon the plain, dull blue cushions of the railway carriage to spare them the aching stare of ugliness outside. The station at which one arrives is as ugly as the station which one has left, and after

a short walk in the mud and rain or in winter's sooty fog, one's mind, even if it is not disposed to thankfulness as a rule, may experience a sense of gratitude and pleasure at such simple contrasts to discomfort as a gas-lit parlour, or a kitchen and a bright fire.

To the common mind, the unidealising eye, the parish hall of All Saints, Witham Street, appears to be constructed on lines purposely designed to offend every canon of art and beauty.

To the Vicar, of course, the hall was a joy for ever. Who but he knows how many begging letters had to be written before it could be hired or built? Who but he knows that this dreary hall was for years the crowning point of his ambition, the subject of his most earnest prayers? No one can quite see the hall with the Vicar's eyes, except the Curate, and the Curate thanks God for it every day of his life.

The windows of the dreary structure were large and built high up in the wall, the neighbouring houses encroached upon it to the exclusion of most of the light, and the low, grey sky could only be seen by extending one's head beyond the grimy window-ledge and looking upwards. The floor of the room was of boards, clean scrubbed, but grey in colour, and the hard, unyielding benches were of a darker shade of the same prevailing tone. At the far end of the room there was an unlovely platform of bare boards and a stage with crazy wings—the remaining evidence of the choir-boys' theatricals

which took place last week. The platform was littered with a few cane chairs placed untidily upon it, and in one corner there stood a cottage piano of walnut wood, with a faded green silk back. (The piano had been a direct answer to prayer.) Some plain, straight gas-brackets depended from the white-washed ceiling, and at the back of the rows of benches which formed the auditorium were placed two or three long tressel tables, upon which were spread tea and bread and butter, and pungent-smelling pickles in open saucers.

For this was a gala day, and the mothers were to be fed. They came in ones and twos, walking with the ungainly tread of the lower classes, and sat down clumsily upon the wooden benches. There was very little talking—sustained conversation was unknown; like children, the people of this class will observe what actually passes before their eyes, but it is rare to find them making intelligent remarks upon an abstract question. That there should be any necessity for speech, or for intercourse between mind and mind, did not remotely suggest itself to them. The mothers had come to be entertained with amateur music and food, and they sat stolidly until the process was completed.

Two handsome girls—Lord Denham's daughters—had driven down in their brougham with their maid and their mandolins, to do good work in Bethnal Green. A jolly party—three girls and a young man with a banjo—had come down in a third-class carriage from West London, and there

were two Sisters of Mercy in snowy caps, and with silver crosses on their breasts, who permeated the scene, and went in and out of the door leading to the outer passage in a somewhat restless, uneasy way, which, in others, might have been called fidgeting. The Curate, who was a gentleman and a public school man, was about as smoke-grimed and dirty as one who spends his days in the slums can be. His appearance was that of a man who has too many things to remember. His memory-assisting handkerchief was knotted almost to uselessness, and his shirts generally went to the wash with the needs of half the parish written on the cuffs. The Curate was nearly always dirty and tired, and always enthusiastic. His shoulders stooped a little, and his curly hair was prematurely thinned.

To the thousand or two of Christian souls under his immediate care, the Curate was a living well of sympathy; but the term was too high to express his parishioners' view of him. He was the man who gave coal-tickets and boots, and therefore it was wise to encourage him by a regular attendance at church. Everyone could draw upon the Curate's sympathy and good humour; his pleasant words never failed, and he was unaware that his parishioners despised his unvarying gaiety. He gave himself thoroughly; gave himself in charity and exhortation, and, most of all, in sympathy. And for the renewal of his forces of energy he might look and look in vain in that society in Bethnal Green wherein he had cast his lot. There was no re-

vivifying power in his district, strike where he would. No one ever made a humorous suggestion, nor uttered a remark that was above the Curate's own very ordinary powers of intellect. Mental refreshment was absolutely unknown. Impulse to effort came from the contemplation of a mixture of dullness and sordid poverty; but the Curate fought the thing out well, even heroically, although you will not find him a very heroic figure in his muddy boots and black clothes, and with his too ready smile, which was intended to be encouraging, but was sometimes a little pathetic, and often foolishly mechanical.

He came into the room where the mothers were assembled, with his air of enthusiasm and his smile, and his very grimy face, and crossing over the room his eyes lit up with real pleasure when he saw Enid.

"I felt sure you would come," he said; "I remembered your promise to me when we met in the Holy Land, that you would help us when we should both get back to town." His voice had the throaty intonation so inseparable from the voice of the man who reads the lessons in church every Sunday, but his manner was sincere, gentlemanly, and very full of pleasure. "You remember the photographs that I took? I had them put on magic-lantern slides, and I have been giving a series of lectures (illustrated) on Palestine. I wonder if you could do something of that sort yourself for us one night? How do you do, Lady Helen? How good of you

to come! This sort of meeting gives so much pleasure. No, I do not think all the mothers can have come yet; we are generally a much larger party; at least we are sometimes larger, but of course it is so often difficult for these women to get away from home. Shall we begin? Is everyone ready? I should like to give them another five minutes, just to see if anyone else will come."

He took out his watch, and his look of enthusiasm faded a little as he looked at the sparsely-filled hall, and realised how few mothers had responded to the invitation to be entertained, even when, as now, tea was included in the entertainment.

He turned to Enid again. "You must allow us to work you very hard," he said pleasantly. (Inez smiled grimly. She had come down to the East End with her sister-in-law, "Because if Enid is bent upon killing herself," said Mrs. Bretherton, "I may as well be at hand to bring home the remains. Besides, I want to see what this giant Moloch, called the East End, is really like.")

"I think," the Curate went on, "everyone is a little bit afraid of us down here; they know that we get such a lot of work out of them when they do come. . . . I am afraid we really must begin."

He mounted the platform, hat in hand—his enthusiasm never deserted him for long, and was certainly never absent when he began to speak. "I am sure," he said cordially, raising his tired voice with its well-bred accent and kindly intona-

tion, "that we are all very grateful to the ladies and gentlemen who have come down here to entertain us this afternoon."

The mothers stirred uneasily on the wooden benches, and the speaker accepted this as a sign of applause; it prompted him to make his best Mothers'-Meeting joke. "And I'm sure all we mothers," he said, "will enjoy the delightful programme which they have prepared for us!"

The Curate always felt that he was at his best with mothers. That his position amongst them should strike a lay mind as being singularly inappropriate never occurred to him. He often said gratefully that he thought he understood them. The mothers, who had heard his little joke before, nevertheless appreciated it, and they put up withered or grimy hands to their toothless mouths and laughed a little behind them.

"I am sure," continued the Curate, still further encouraged, "that even the oldest mother amongst us is not going to let them go away this afternoon without according them a hearty vote of thanks."

There is something about seeing a very tired man trying to make jokes, which is almost as painful as seeing the fixed grin on some lifeless skull.

"The first item on the programme," said the Curate, "is a violin solo by Miss Finch."

East End mothers appreciate only what is broadly comic, and to be thoroughly popular the subject of the joke should be babies. It is only an audience of grizzled soldiers or rough mechanics

that can enjoy pathos or sentiment. The violin solo fell flat, as did a guitar-and-mandolin duet. And the Curate, nervously apologetic, came and sat down by Mrs. Bretherton, and said to her hopefully, "These women would all be in the public-house if they were not here."

"Then we have really put them to the inconvenience of postponing their visit there for an hour," murmured Inez. "That seems a little hard! I suppose, however, that the postponement has to be made but once a month."

"They do enjoy this so!" said the Curate, with his professional air of optimism.

He was too pathetic a figure to crush; Inez remained silent, and listened to the rest of the programme.

A woman in black entered the room with two girls. They were dull-faced creatures, in whom a certain natural flashiness and impudence had been stamped out by the dreariness of their miserable existence. The woman who entered with them was, perhaps, almost more plainly dressed than anyone else in the room, and she came in more quietly than the others had done, yet way was made for her by the door, and even this Bethnal Green audience, not conspicuous for its mannerliness, gave place to her directly, moving up a few places on the wooden benches.

The Curate went forward delightedly, and addressed her with something more than his usual mechanical cordiality—the cordiality that was set

in motion automatically by the sight of a parishioner's face. "Well done, Mrs. Smith," he said; "it isn't often that we see you at our entertainments, but I see you have brought two of your girls. Capital, capital! We have a splendid programme, Mrs. Smith," and he handed her one of the printed slips he held in his hand.

Mrs. Smith thanked him quietly, and began to look at the programme, and the Curate went back to Mrs. Bretherton. It was difficult to interest strangers in his people—yet, their ears once gained, they might perhaps come and help some other time. "Now there," he said, "if you want something dramatic amongst the poor, there is a woman whom we call the silent Mrs. Smith, but the good she does amongst the girls in this parish is incalculable—incalculable! We hand over all our most difficult cases to her," he continued volubly, "and we have no idea what her methods are, but the worst girls in the place seem influenced for good by her. Those whom she rescues go to stay with her as guests in her tiny house, and although they work sometimes, I believe work is optional. Their poor neighbours call them 'Mrs. Smith's ladies!' I should really like you to say a few words to her, if you would be good enough."

As the Curate spoke, there was a stir amongst the people on the front benches, and the excited whisper went about that Mrs. Smith was ill. An East End audience enjoys nothing so much as a sudden illness—a fainting attack or a fit in a public

place. They crowded round the unfortunate sufferer, and their emotions of kindness, always easily roused by what passes before their eyes, were expended in loud-spoken sympathy on behalf of the afflicted person. A dweller in the East End lives on excitement, and whereas, perhaps, fastidious persons in the West of London may be shocked at a drunken brawl, it is without doubt that these derive some amount of very real pleasure from it. They live at high pressure, our neighbours in the East, and it shows itself in loud and sudden laughter, drunkenness and quarrellings, which, for the most part, mean nothing but a desire for excitement and a scene. Everything that appeals to them, either mentally or physically, must be strong—strong-flavoured foods, rank pickles, and the skins of oranges; highly flavoured romances in their penny literature, lurid horrors depicted in woodcuts, vivid representations in their drama. Reason has hardly any effect upon them. So a blow or a torrent of words takes the place of reason.

It was a little hard that their feverish craving for excitement should be frustrated by Mrs. Smith's conduct this afternoon. The quiet woman in black simply left the room, followed by one of the Sisters, who asked if she could do anything for her, and the Curate, who bustled to the door and suggested calling a doctor. Mrs. Smith apologised for having made a disturbance, and said that she was now quite well, and asked the Sister if she would see

that her girls returned home when the concert was over.

"A really nice woman that," said the Curate, returning to his place beside Mrs. Bretherton, as the interrupted concert was continued again.

Two songs from a young lady who sang out of tune were received almost in silence. Then the comic young man who had come with the three cheerful girls got up to begin his performance. He was a delicate-looking, fair-haired boy, who went into the very best society in West London and the very worst in East London, and he sang a song about a baby. He sang the same song at East End concerts on an average of once a week, and it never failed to call forth a round of applause. When he dandled an imaginary baby (as he did on an average once a week), the mothers laughed and Did-you-evered, again putting their hands instinctively to their mouths to conceal their lack of teeth. There was not a woman in the room with good teeth.

The comic young man was always flattered by the applause which he received; perhaps it accounted, in some measure, for his zeal in entertaining the poor. He gave an encore gladly, and when he had finished the mothers sank back into apathy again, and passed the time nursing their babies. There was an immense fire in the room, and the atmosphere was thick and hot. At five o'clock those performers who did not stop to help with the tea began to consult their watches, and

prepared to leave to catch the five-fifteen train back to London. The Curate sprang up and thanked everyone in a speech with two little jokes in it, and suggested that we should all show our appreciation by giving "three hearty cheers."

The mothers clapped their hands, and the ladies and gentlemen who had sung and played rolled up music and snapped the clasps of violin cases, and said "Good evening" as they went out into the dusky fog; the Sisters of Mercy shook hands with everybody, and murmured gentle words of thanks.

"So this is charity," said Inez smiling, "this is really charity in the East End of London, and the tone of the people is to be raised by one hour of amateur music, contributed by some half dozen ladies and gentlemen who appear suddenly with banjos and violins, and who disappear as suddenly, to return to the other world of which East London knows nothing at all."

Enid had come to help distribute the tea which, indeed, she had provided; there were far too many helpers waiting at the tables, and these ran against each other and laughed good-naturedly, or made pleasant remarks to the mothers. She herself sat at the top of one of the tables, filling up cups from a copper urn, and chatting pleasantly to the women seated on either side of her.

"With her fatal habit of idealising everything," soliloquised Inez, "my beautiful sister-in-law is seeing this very ugly and appallingly stuffy room quite other than it is. These women, doubtless, are, to

her, typical of motherhood only, and that in some high sense of which these good creatures themselves have no idea. Suffering, poverty, distress, and all the hideousness of life are wrought by her into some phantasy of loveliness which she finds entirely reasonable and admirable. For me, the matter presents itself in quite another light. 'He feels for little children,' Enid says to the worn, sick mothers, 'and His mother knew just what you are feeling.' And that satisfies her, and indeed it seems to console them also."

"I think I must go home now," said Enid; "I am a little tired."

"You are generally tired," said Inez, taking her vacant place at the tea-table.

Lady Gurney was prevented from driving home in peace to obtain the rest she so much required, owing to the fact that Milly Cobb's hair was to be cut off. Milly was in a home in Transome Street, where she was working out her salvation at the wash-tub. She had submitted to a good deal of "interference" since she had entered on a Home-and-laundry-work expiation of her many mistakes, but she was not going to be deprived of her hair without a struggle. The matron was accustomed to outbreaks amongst the turbulent spirits at the wash-tub; ungoverned fits of temper, curious and unexplained, were not uncommon in the laundry, and were the trial of those who tried to discipline characters as wild and untamed as those of some savage races and perhaps more brutal. To-day the outbreak was

a serious one, and the result was a stoppage of the traffic in Transome Street E. through which Lady Gurney's coachman found it impossible to pass. Transome Street was the district which the enthusiastic Curate had allotted to Lady Gurney for her visitations, and when the carriage stopped she leaned out of the window and recognised several faces in the crowd.

The old coachman glanced apprehensively from his seat on the box. The crowd had closed in behind the carriage, and he found it impossible to turn his horses.

"You'd be safer walking, my lady," said a burly coal-heaver at the window of the carriage; "your windows will be smashed in a moment. They've begun throwing stones already."

"What has happened? Is anything wrong?" she asked anxiously.

"It's only one of them wild cats in the Home broke out," the man replied. "Milly Cobb she is, and she's got her pals to come and help her storm the windows. Gawd 'elp the matron, I say, if there's many goin' to join this 'ere demonstration."

"Murrell," said Enid entreatingly, "please help me! I remember you quite well; it's your wife, you know, who does needle-work for me sometimes. I must get through this crowd somehow to Milly."

"Milly Cobb's as drunk as a lord!" said the coal-heaver calmly. "Gawd 'imself can't do much for Milly Cobb to-day!"

"Let James go with you, my lady," entreated the

coachman, and the footman in his long, light over-coat with the cockade in his hat, followed quickly after her. The hat soon rolled in the gutter, and a hooligan of the pavement thought it a fit occasion to show his general disapproval of all footmen, and of all hats with cockades in them, by hustling the man, who instinctively turned to recover the hat which had been knocked off his head; at the same moment the crowd cut him off from his mistress, and Enid was alone.

"You keep clear of this," said someone in the press about her; "we know who you are down here, my lady, and you are safest out of this."

The worst of the disturbance raged round the door of the Home in Transome Street. It had been barred from inside, but the yelling crowd had aimed sticks and stones and missiles at it, until it seemed more than likely that the panels would be burst in. The girl, Milly Cobb, with cropped black hair ruffled upwards from blazing eyes, and a distorted, passionate face, had rolled up the sleeves of her neat pink cotton dress, the uniform of the Home, and had torn it open at the neck. Now she stood, brawny armed, her chest swelling and her muscular throat bare, and shouted to her followers, the scum of the London gutters, to tear down the stones of the Home. Her language, long ago past all bounds of decency, became almost incomprehensible in its torrent of invective and its horrible uncontrol.

"Heave 'er out of the window, girls!" she yelled,

and then followed a recital of her wrongs at the top of her high-pitched frenzied voice. "I'll teach her! I'll do for her!" A torrent of bad language followed, and calumnies were heaped on the head of the matron.

A ghoulish, white-faced youth handed her a bottle of whisky to "wet her whistle," and Milly took a great gulp of the fluid, coughed and spluttered, and then went on with her raging torrent of words again. Some girls from a jam factory near by, deep-chested, brawny women, each of them an outlaw at heart, joined the rabble and added their noise to the din that already raged round the girl. A soldier's red coat showed itself on the edge of the crowd. Windows were thrown open on either side of the street, and then as suddenly closed, for stones were hurled uncertainly, and might strike anywhere. Mere children, with the savage instinct for seeing blood drawn, appeared from crowded court and tenement, and were crushed almost to death by the swaying mob. A policeman appeared and was overpowered, his truncheon was dragged from him, and the incident added enormously to the satisfaction of the crowd. Hatless women with worn faces and pale eyes, in the tatterdemalion dress of the London streets, pressed forward to get a view of their fellow-woman, and the men urged the demented girl with horrible applause.

"I am here, Milly," said Enid, and she stood beside the girl and laid her hand upon her arm.

The crowd pressed heavily upon them, but the

footman had broken through the thickest of it and stood by his mistress. "This way, please, my lady," he said.

"'Ere's a swell!" shouted one derisively.

"Pop 'er into the 'ome 'erself," began another, but the horrible joke fell flat, and Murrell had the man's head under his arm and pummelled it with some gigantic blows of his great fists.

Enid linked her arm in the girl's; she was perfectly silent, and that in itself was impressive in the midst of this roaring crowd. Her face was set, but the look of pity upon it was more powerful than any reproof could have been. Her white cheeks, the aureole of fair hair, the noble face, had in them something not so much commanding as distant. Here was something untouched by violent language, and set unconsciously high above the storm and clamour. The crowd divided as though they had been merely a tangle of wood or slender boughs that can be pushed aside at will, as she walked on silently with the grace and the confidence which a woman feels who has been served all her life.

"Let the lydy paust; 'ere, myke room for 'er, I sy. Get out of the lydy's wy, can't yer?"

"'Oo said I was blocking the wy? Jest yer mind what yer do sy, then!"

"'Ere, miss, I'll 'elp yer; 'ere's yer chaunst, miss; pass along 'ere!"

"'Ere's Milly Cobb going 'ome to be a lydy!" sang out a woman's voice from the crowd. "Part yer 'air, Milly, and go into service!" A shout of

laughter showed that the woman was mimicking the popular advice bestowed so freely by lady workers amongst the girls.

Enid went forward, still holding the girl by the hand. It was not until she reached her carriage, and the footman held open the door, while the crowd gazed curiously from all sides, that she realised the difficulties of the situation. If Milly refused to go back into the Home—and it certainly would be impossible to take her back in her present violent mood—what was to be done with her? Suddenly Enid bethought herself of the silent woman whom Mr. Terhune had pointed out to her at the Mothers' Meeting—the woman who scarcely ever went anywhere, and hardly ever spoke, but who, on the testimony of both Vicar and Curate, had an extraordinary power over girls. The impulse to see the woman and to commit Milly to her care came like an inspiration, and Enid gave the order to drive to the little house in Bethnal Green.

Milly, after sitting dazed for some time in the unusual circumstance of driving in a brougham seated beside a lady in soft clothes who took her hand and spoke to her with a gentle voice, was now overcome with a fit of shyness and hysteria, mingled with penitence for her late conduct. Utterly unrestrained, after the fashion of her class, she burst into hysterical sobs and sank on to the floor of the carriage, burying her face in the cushions, and giving way to a tempest of tears. Her disordered pink cotton dress, her bare arms and

rough hair, and her face suffused with tears, contrasted oddly with the luxury of the carriage, its interior linings of dark green morocco, the smooth rubber tyres, and the pair of thoroughbred horses, and the two men sitting erect on the box.

"Milly, dear," said Enid, "sit upon the seat. I want to talk to you." She raised the girl to a sitting attitude, arranged the disordered frock, and pulled down over the bare arms the poor child's cotton sleeves. "I won't leave you; no one shall hurt you." The voice itself soothed and calmed the violent girl. "I will take you to some one who will be kind to you."

The carriage drew up at the humble door where Mrs. Smith lived. She came to answer the summons on the bell herself, and Enid was struck afresh by her appearance. There was something very quiet and strong about this elderly woman with the grey hair and plain black dress. The deep eyes looked with a sort of gentle understanding at the world. Comprehensive, universal knowledge of the compassionate sort seemed to be the prevailing characteristic of her face. Probably she was never shocked; she knew the world too well for that. She was not shocked now by Milly's plight, but took her gently by the hand, and drew her within the door.

"Can you help us? Will you find room for her?" Enid said eagerly, and led her aside while she quickly told Milly's story, and begged for Mrs. Smith's protection for her, promising to help and

provide for her in every way. "I know how much you do for girls who are in danger and difficulties, and this is a sad case which needs so much care!"

"I will take her," said Mrs. Smith quietly.

For a moment Enid wondered if she had ever heard her speak before, for now the voice, with its deep, gentle intonation, struck her as singular coming from this poor woman in her humble dress and in this little shabby house.

"I don't believe I have told you my name yet," she said, smiling.

"I know your name," said Mrs. Smith.

"Ah, we met at the mothers' tea, did we not? Mr. Treherne told me about you then, and you were the first person I thought of in my distress. Good-bye," she said, extending her hand.

"Good-bye," said Mrs. Smith.

The brougham drove home rapidly, and under cover of darkness Lady Gurney's coachman continued a broken conversation he had begun with his subordinate on the box of the carriage.

"Well, I wish they was all at the bottom of the sea before my lady touched them," said Hexham piously, as he drove his horses homewards. "You can't alter things in this world. No one can, so what's the use! Why, look here, I've been into the British Museum and seen things there thousands of years old, and I have just said to myself how like they are to things you have now!"

"I don't believe they had railways and 'buses,"

hazarded James, airing a little knowledge with which he hoped to impress the old family servant.

"I'm not talking of things of that sort, but just of human nature, and what folks have always liked to have. . . . And what's the use of gainsaying 'em if they want to have 'em? . . . Now, there's ladies' ornaments lying there in rows under a glass case in the British Museum, and they's dated thousands of years back, and all those thousands of years the parsons have been worritting at them and badgering at them to give 'em up. . . . But they ain't going to do it, James, so what's the use of bothering? Women was born with the love of pretty things to hang round their necks, just as they was born with the love of children, and very little harm their liking for their bits of things does them in my opinion. Same way we was born with the love of fighting, and I do believe of enjoying our vittles. Why, in all those old pictures of kings and princes there's always a girl bringing them something to eat, or else they was fighting. . . . When I sees any of my lads fighting, you never hears me say 'Don't,' for I am not a parson, and it's a parson who is always at you with his 'Don'ts,' but I ses 'It's in you, lads; have it out, and then shake hands.' "

"Yes, sir," said James.

"I'm not a scholar," said the old man; "it wasn't the fashion when I was young to be speaking other folks' languages, and reading papers when you ought to be looking after your horses. We let each

man speak his own language, and didn't interfere with them, and we didn't read a lot of print which only dazzles folks' eyes. But I've always noticed this, things goes in threes, and always will do. There's men, women, and children; then there's good, bad, and indifferent; there's hot, cold, and middlin'; and there's rich folk and poor folk and the middle classes. You will never abolish one class any more than you will another. They've been there, so far as I can hear, ever since there was enough folk in the world to make three classes. And it's got to be for always, because there is a rule of three in everything. And there's a rule, too, that we are all going to be very like what we was made at first, just as a baby grows up very like what he was when his mother first saw him. They spread out a bit and gets firmer like, but bless you, their eyes and their noses and their mouths are just where they're going to be till it's earth to earth with 'em."

"Yes, sir," said James.

"And so," said the coachman, "we may just as well leave people alone, because they always have been and they always will be, and you can't get away from that, and it certainly ain't worth my lady risking her health and her life for anyone of 'em."

The carriage drew up at the door and James descended nimbly from the box, while Sir Philip himself opened the door of the hall and came down the steps to meet his wife. He drew her within

the lighted hall and removed the heavy cloak which she wore. "I was getting anxious about you," he said, "I thought you were coming straight home to rest before dinner."

She told him her story in a few words, making as light as possible of the disturbance, but Philip was full of anxiety and distress, and exclaimed quickly, "In a street row! *you*, Enid! I can't have it. You must not go into these horrible places any more!" His sensitive mouth beneath the brown beard trembled oddly for a moment. His wife's attitude of mind, her whole outlook on social questions was so absolutely different from his own! Philip believed that, if he were to argue out the case with her and put before her the only reasonable solutions of social problems, he could and must persuade her of the purely visionary character of her ideas of reform. Faith produced utterly unworkable qualities—hopeless sentimentalism, strange contradictions, great stupidity, and joyless unsuccess! But who could dare to point these things out to her, or venture to pour into those ears, so well tuned to receive only what was faithful and beautiful, the grim realities that make up and have made up the sum of man's existence in all ages in a crowded and disordered world? How could he suggest to her the hopelessness of the social problem? No one could touch London! The great, vast, rotten core of it was still absolutely untouched, and what were a handful of gentle women and enthusiastic men that they should attempt to stay the corruption at the

heart of modern civilisation? The attempt was in itself pitiful by its very impotence. Yet men and women were struggling and even dying for this cause, buoyed up by a hope for which there seemed to men of reasonable mind no ground whatever.

And Enid had been buffeted in a crowd! She had forced her way through the ruffianism of Tran-some Street to rescue a girl, because she had a soul to save! Ah, the folly of it! The pitiful magnificent folly of it!

When, later, a tiny, delicate little girl was born, Inez shrugged her shoulders and said, "Another martyr to this rapacious Church—this Moloch of theirs!"

But Enid's joy was complete. What if the child were weak and ailing, she would surely get stronger soon! What if her own life had hung on a thread for one whole night, while Philip sat listening in the stillness of the library down below, and the traffic rolled by in a muffled roar in the straw-strewn street outside. Day had dawned at last after a black night, and with the dawning had come joy and safety and a child in its mother's arms.

"Does she not see," said Inez to the nurse, "what a poor little mite it is?"

"No," said the woman of the white cap, "they never see."

But with Philip it was different. He came to visit his sister in her handsome house with its comfortable drawing-rooms, its easy chairs and flowers, and sat down looking tired and harassed.

"Yes, thank you," he was saying, "Enid is getting on very well, but the child does not seem to grow any stronger. Was Reggie at all like that?" he asked boyishly. "I mean, you know more about babies than I do, but the nurse does not give me a very good account of it, and I couldn't help wondering if she were something of an alarmist."

Inez knitted her brows. "I really know very little about babies," she said. "I am afraid I used rather to despise them until I had Reggie, and found that one does not bring any scrap of reason to bear upon the situation, but pure indefensible instinct and nothing else."

"One does not dare even tell her that it is not very strong," went on Philip, pursuing his own line of thought, "but it can't be natural for a tiny creature to cry so distressfully. Why, Inez, it is a moan more than a cry!"

"I know," said his sister. "I asked the doctors about it, but they would not say anything."

"She is to be christened next week," said Philip. "Oh, by the way," he said, and hesitated before giving his message, "Enid wanted me to ask you if you would be godmother?"

"Dear Philip!" said Inez, smiling, "is not the suggestion rather a humorous one to make to me?"

"I know you don't believe in sacraments," he said.

"I believe in ten million sacraments," cried his sister, "or in none! The whole world is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace or

it is not. And only a Church could have limited sacraments to two—or is it seven?"

"The Dean of Malincourt is coming to stay with us to christen the child," said Philip, in a tone which refused to accept his sister's challenge of argument; "he said he was coming to see you this afternoon."

The Dean was announced at the same moment, and Mrs. Bretherton shook hands cordially with him, and then said, with perhaps a light attempt at explanation of her concluding words which the old man might have overheard, or from a desire to force upon her brother the challenge which he had refused, "I am trying to find a delightful harmonious ascetic religion for my brother, as women try to suit themselves with a gown. You know," she went on, "everything should be determined by suitability. Now, here is Philip, an artist and not a mystic, a carver of graven images and not a worshipper. That is artistically wrong, is it not?"

Philip extended his hand affectionately to the Dean. "As a matter of fact," he said, smiling, "I am undergoing a gibe at the hands of my sister on the ground that it is an anomaly for a heretic to have his child baptized."

The Dean was not easily dragged into a discussion. He accepted some tea and praised Mrs. Bretherton's lilies-of-the-valley, which scented the whole room, and then asked her how her book was getting on. "I have read it with the greatest pleasure," he said, "and I would much rather discuss it

than give you the lecture on orthodoxy which I believe you rather expect over your tea-cups."

"Have you been writing a book, Inez?" Philip said, raising his eyebrows in surprise. "I had no idea you had been writing. What is the book? May one read it?"

"Oh, I have had my cry and am done with it," said Inez lightly. "Most women write one book; it is really their only legitimate form of self-expression."

The irritation of a few moments back departed altogether from her brother's handsome face. Perhaps only he knew the underlying tragedy of this woman's life. "I remember," he said affectionately, "that you were very clever at stringing verses together when we were children, so I think I may guess that the book is poetry."

"Yes," said Inez, and added, "the reviews speak well of it, and my literary friends tell me that no reviewers know anything about literature."

Philip smiled under his beard, and turning to his sister said encouragingly, "I must see these reviews —may I?"

She handed him over a handful of cuttings from various newspapers, and he saw that I. B.'s volume of verses was considered one of the striking and forcible books of the day. "The intensity of their feeling," "their passionate mournfulness," "their splendid faith in all that was humanly good," was commented upon with every expression of approval by the English press.

"I am in terror now," said Inez with a quick change of mood, "lest anyone should know that I wrote them, and I am disgusted with myself for having signed my initials to them."

The Dean rose to go. He knew that whereas with some women reserve is almost painful, to Inez Bretherton self-revelation meant horrible suffering, and more than this, that when one of her rare outbreaks was over, her self-condemnation hardened her reserve and made her more remote and sensitive than before.

The poems with their stifled cry sounding through the verse would, he knew, create in her a reaction from herself and her own mood as soon as another heard it. He believed that the reviews that she had just read had shown her for the first time that her readers had had the impertinence to understand her, and that she resented it with all the keenness of a sensitive nature.

"The Dean," said Philip, as the door closed behind him, "is one of the crowd that never stays to gape."

His departure and the simple commonplaces of good-byes had given Mrs. Bretherton a moment to recover herself. She settled herself in her chair again, and busied her strong, powerful hands with knitting as though to overcome some inward fret.

"Tell me about the book," said Philip.

"Here in England," she began, with a return of her usual manner, with its strain of hardness under

the lightly-spoken words, "where we can still turn the key in our front doors and draw the curtains when the lamplight might reveal some ugly tales to those who walk outside; we who pride ourselves upon this protection, this privacy, we fling off all our raiment sometimes as mad people do, and then fall to beating our breasts with shame when saner moments come." Her voice deepened and became slightly lower in tone. "Soul revelation, which is another word for writing, is a mania, Philip, believe me. It is a sign of the unstableness of the human mind to keep itself to itself. And I was actually proud of my verses," she went on; "I thought the lines were fine, and I wished that the book would be well reviewed. Perhaps I even half hoped that people would know who wrote it. And now I have come to my senses and find that I have stripped off the mask from my face before a vulgar and impertinent world."

He felt deeply for her; but his sister's moods were too intense, or rather, on rare occasions like this, too passionate, to make for peace or enjoyment. He believed she would rather be left alone, and he bade her good-bye and walked homewards in the pale winter sunshine, and in the face of a cutting wind. He was sorry for her, but her stormy spirit did not make for peace, and even in her disciplined and most reserved moods there was always the smouldering fire under the crust of conventionality.

How restful to return to his own house, with its

dim walls covered with tapestry, and the plaintive notes from the organ in the chapel sounding like boys' voices singing in a choir. All here was rest and peace and pleasure, and his wife held the key to it. The house seemed filled with her, a brooding presence full of a happy quiet. He went to find her in the drawing-room with its shaded lights and stained glass windows, and soft, melodious colourings. She was lying on a sofa by the fire in her weakness and beauty, some soft, clinging wrapper about her, and her golden hair, knotted loosely by the nurse's unskilled fingers, lying like a coil on the moss-green velvet cushions. One arm encircled the form of her child which nestled close to her, and all her heart was in her eyes as she looked at it. She raised a radiant face as her husband entered the room, and held out her disengaged arm to him with a beautiful gesture of welcome. A look of perfect satisfaction and content was in his face as he sank into a low chair by her couch.

"Why is it," he said, "that there is nothing like this in all the world? Nothing was ever quite so good or so beautiful before!"

A sense of the permanence of family life to the man who had wandered far—the feeling it gave of rest and peace—appealed strongly to him. He took her dear hand that had given him liberally all that he most desired in life, and leaning over it he kissed it reverently.

All that he had, all that he desired, all that he could ever be, were hers absolutely; and now, in a

fresh access of love towards her, he felt that mind and soul—his very beliefs—were hers to do with as she would. Love was stronger than death, certainly stronger than creeds or opinions. In his mind there was almost a sense of submissiveness to the soul of this woman. Enough for him to see in her all that seemed to him finest and most beautiful in life. He did not even seek that she should be his guide, for a guide suggested some unknown paths to tread. He had no need of prayer, for here and now he had found all that he wanted, and his heart was lifted up beyond the things of common day. All was good. He bowed his head in the presence of something that was too high for him.

Such a moment is the sanctification of a lifetime.

The wailing of the child broke discordantly upon it, and Enid turned and gathered it more closely to her to still its fretful weeping.



PART II

CHAPTER XI

It was summer at Malincourt four years later, and Hubert Malincourt had returned from his long sojourn in the Near East. It was only yesterday that he had arrived in the dark of a moonless summer night, and now, in the sunshine of the morning, he sat on the stone terrace with its yellowing flags and broad balustrade, and gazed thoughtfully over the pleasant landscape. His eyes, so used to different scenes, rested contentedly, and with a sort of settled enjoyment in them, on the cool greens and greys of the fields and hills and trees, and on the tender, clouded English sky above him. Turks, Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgars had been his principal companions for nearly two years past, in Macedonia, where he had buried his troubles and had fought with enthusiasm for the oppressed and afflicted in a difficult country. Hubert Malincourt had gone, like many another English tourist and traveller, to the Balkans in the hopes of seeing fresh life and gaining fresh interests, and in order to gain information about a country not generally known to the ordinary tourist. He had ended by making a prolonged sojourn there, during which time he had

dispensed relief to a robbed and outraged peasantry, and had even written passionately of the sufferings which he saw. His country sometimes found him a bore, and English officials considered him a danger, while even his best friends dubbed him fanatic. But Hubert had ridden forth with something of the Crusader spirit in him, and he was not easily silenced. For months he had lived in a disturbed and dangerous part of the country, his only possessions his horse and the portable necessities of the road, and day after day every nerve had been strained to the utmost and every essential of his character had been used with splendid force. Boyhood, youngmanhood even, had slipped from him like a cloak. Initiative was necessary at every step of the way, untiring watchfulness also, and decisions had to be made without a moment's hesitation. It had been a life of danger and excitement and intense strain, and in places where massacres had been plentiful, and sickness more than abundant, it had been also a life of energy and responsibility. The outraged peasantry looked to him as their deliverer, the bandits of the mountains were afraid of him. And now Hubert had returned. He was at this time a man prematurely grey about the temples, with grave eyes, dreamy and yet searching. He probably saw much and said very little, and a certain delightful courtesy of manner veiled a reserve which was almost impenetrable. He had lived hardly for the last two years, yet had become stronger than when he went away. A certain boyish delicacy and

weediness had developed into something energetic and manly, although Hubert was still a byword for the sparseness of his frame, and had the air of a boy who had grown beyond his strength. His high forehead was lined like that of an older man, and time had written almost too legibly on his features the story of a life that had felt keenly. Probably one had to know him well before discovering the curious lack in him of any necessity for enjoyment. Where other men rested it hardly occurred to Hubert to pause in his work. It would have been difficult to think of him as having what is commonly called a good time. He attended committee meetings when his fellows were hunting and shooting, and wrote pamphlets on the sufferings of Macedonian villagers when his contemporaries were enjoying country-house parties. To those with whom honest enjoyment is a daily experience, there might seem to be something ascetic and remote in the man who hardly ever had time to handle a gun, and to whom a day in the hunting-field was a rare treat. But in those who knew better his gentle, kindly spirit, a sense of admiration for his character generally took the place of this feeling of estrangement, and Hubert had more friends probably than he was the least aware of, or ever stopped to count.

Only five days ago he had left a country of blazing skies and heat, unmade roads, ruined bridges, and rough fare; and to-day he was at quiet, stately Malincourt with its suggestion of safety and security, with its trained and valued old family serv-

ants, its pictures and books and gardens. He had returned to his mother with her elaborately-dressed white hair, her laces and ribbons and flowing velvets, and to the dogs and horses that he had loved and that knew his voice again the instant he spoke. He had come back to this life of homely scenes and protection and peace, and he had come back, too, to Enid, and this seemed to him the most strange thing of all.

"She and I are here together after four years," he was saying to himself as he sat on the terrace in the sunlight. "She the wife of a man whom I cordially like, and I perhaps not quite such a coward as I was when I ran away from it all four years ago. I have missed the best—I suppose I shall always be aware of that; but other men have also missed their best. After all, life is not very long, and at least I have got some work to do. I took her hand last night, and I don't imagine anyone could guess what that meant to me. . . . How little things have altered here! There is old Simon still weeding as I have known him weeding ever since I was a child!" He smiled at the folly of his own thoughts. "Four years," he commented, "is not an eternity! One cannot expect to find half a village in their graves in four years because one feels oneself half a century older. That big bell hanging between the fir-trees over there, clanging for the men's dinner-hour as it has clanged for how many generations, it almost seems like a dream now! But in a couple of weeks I shall feel that Malincourt is the only reality, and

that it is my four years' absence that is made of such stuff as dreams are made of. . . . After all, it is good to be back again, and Enid is as beautiful as ever. . . . I wonder where is her little girl that my mother has often written about—a delicate little creature, I understand. I should like to see her child."

As he spoke a footstep sounded on the gravel path below the great parapet of stone where he sat, and a small, low carriage with rubber tyres to the wheels glided softly across the smoothly-rolled gravel, pushed by a nurse in a white dress, quite dazzling in the sunlight. The carriage was of a long, flat shape, with some embroidered linens laid over it, and a cotton tilt to keep the sun off the child who lay there. He just caught sight of a little dark head and a pair of large bright eyes as the nurse wheeled the little couch up and down in the sunlight, then a low side-door of the house opened, and Enid came out on to the terrace. She went directly down the flight of marble steps where, on the pathway between wide borders of flowers, her little girl awaited her. Hubert could see her from where he sat, and watched her quick movements as she pushed back the cotton tilt of the carriage and gazed at the little figure beneath it, then she addressed some words to the nurse, and lifting the child from its cot-like carriage, she walked up and down with it in her arms, talking gently to it, telling it to "Look, Baby, look," at this object or at that, or smiling down at it without speaking. But the

child was crying with a moaning, sad little cry; and she laid her down presently and very slowly came back again up the dazzling length of the marble stairway.

"Is that your little girl, Enid? You know I am a stranger to all the family news, and I have not even been introduced to my little cousin."

"She is going in now," said Enid; "the nurse thinks she is not so well to-day."

"She is delicate, is she not?" he said gently. "My mother has often told me in her letters that she was not very strong."

"She has been in pain almost ever since she was born," said Enid.

"Ah, but that is sad—horrible!"

"It is what God sends."

"You are still the same as ever?" he questioned, still speaking in that gentle tone. "It has not altered you, this trouble?"

There was silence between them for so long that he turned and looked at her, where she sat motionless on the broad bench beside him. She had covered her face with her hands, and great tears forced their way through her fingers, although no sound came. "Enid!" he said, "Enid, dear, you must not give way like this! What is it? Is the child really so ill?"

"She suffers so, she suffers so!" said Enid brokenly. "Hubert, if she could only have a little rest, a little ease from pain! Why does she suffer —why, why?"

He took her hand gently, and she dried her tears. "I do not often break down like this," she said, as though in gentle apology for a fault, "indeed I don't! It is because I think she is not so well to-day, and then seeing you, who do not of course know all we have been through, has perhaps made me realise everything afresh."

"One cannot bear to think of a little thing like that suffering," said Malincourt kindly; "it is a hideous thought."

"I think," she said in an uncertain voice, which had the painful sound of tears in it, "I think, Hubert, that although you knew the child was delicate, you never pictured her like this. It gave you a shock to see this little crippled child of mine—you thought of her, perhaps, as a little toddling thing—and that is what I must never think of. I can never hear her little feet pattering across the floor, or have her run to meet me when she sees me coming. But, indeed, she has happy moments, happy hours sometimes, and we play together, and she laughs a little. Yesterday she was quite gay, and noticed her toys and flowers. I think I was too hopeful for a little while, and so to-day, when she is worse, I am weak and foolish."

"I am so awfully sorry about it," he said simply, "so awfully sorry."

"Tell me about your travels in the East," she said, with a definite putting of her own interests on one side; "your letters were delightful, but I want to

know more about your doings from your own lips."

He plunged with a sort of quiet eagerness into the subject of his beloved Macedonians. To a man of but one interest a new listener was a fresh opportunity, and he drew graphically, with the intensity of one who is absorbed in his work, a brief sketch of his prolonged sojourn in the difficult, distressed bit of land where many nations make war upon each other. To the world, Hubert Malincourt was in earnest to the point of egotism, but his listener to-day saw, beneath his short, curt speeches, untouched entirely by humour or even a dramatic sense, the man's revolt at unmerited suffering, and his steadfastness in defending the weak. The picture which he drew for her had no need of embellishing touches to make it real. She saw him fighting single-handed, and the vision was an appealing one.

His voice dropped at the close of the brief history which he had related, but his eyes still saw the bare, forsaken country which he championed. He was telling her of the village which had been raided just before he reached it. The inhabitants had been massacred almost to a man, and he spoke of women and children burned in the little houses, and of babies starving while their mothers were shot down in the fields. Now it was a Greek band, well mounted and well armed, who had beaten and robbed and killed, and again it was Bulgars who had attacked a lonely hill village and put the unarmed peasants to the sword. But always the tale

was the same, burning and pillage, restrained by none of the rules of war; no red cross flag defending the wounded and dying, no ambulance at hand to bear them away. He had some photographs which he hesitated to show her, and then, the enthusiast getting the better of him, he drew them from his pocketbook, and spread them on the table in front of her.

She looked unflinchingly at the pictures in front of her, and then returned them to him without speaking.

He replaced the photographs in his pocket, and said lightly, and with a genuine attempt to divorce his thoughts from an absorbing subject, "I do not want to talk any more of what I have been doing; I want to know all that has been happening to you since I went away."

"Philip has done some wonderful work," she replied; "he carves now in a studio which we have built. I think his work gets more beautiful every year. He is quite famous for it."

"What has become of his sister?" said Hubert. "I used to know her in London, and I remember reading in some English papers that she had brought out a book of verses which created quite a sensation, if the newspapers are to be believed."

"Inez regretted the book of verses," said Enid. "She disliked the publicity of the thing, and I think she never knew how far she had gone until people dared to discuss the verses with her! You know her husband was better for a time?"

"Sane, you mean?"

"Yes, he was at home for nearly a year."

"It is to be hoped that the boy won't take after his father," said Hubert.

"Oh, Reggie is the most normal and delightful of boys," said Enid. "My sister-in-law half feared for him when his father was at home, dreading that he might have an ill effect upon him, but they were the closest friends, and Reggie has only a healthy regret at his father's enforced absence from home. . . . Did they tell you?—I mean," smiling, "it is difficult to know what you have heard in your home letters and what you have not heard—did they tell you that when Mr. Bretherton was at home they opened that big Yorkshire place of theirs and lived there for a whole year? Tom seemed to wish it; he dreaded London, whereas his old home was a real pleasure to him. I suppose he felt that no explanation of himself was needed there, and he had not to explain, as he might have had to do to strangers, why it was that he had been away so long."

"I didn't know that they had opened Seagrave, but it seems an excellent thing. The boy ought to grow up amongst his tenants."

"Yes, and he has developed an extraordinary love for the place. Inez will not be much in London now except when he is at school."

"How well my mother looks!" said Hubert. He loved to pick up the threads of past years, sitting here in the sunlight with his cousin. It was in itself a "welcome home" to go over these incidents, yet

it gave a half-bewildered feeling to the man, as it no doubt does to all travellers, to realise that what might have been the most intimate concerns of his life had touched him, and he had touched them so lightly. He was hearing for the first time, years after they had happened, of matters which would probably have made the whole of his life's interest if he had been at home.

Mrs. Malincourt came out on to the terrace with her gardening basket and scissors, a broad, picturesque, black hat upon her white hair, and with a handful of grain to scatter on the pavement to the doves who flocked from the tall stone chimneys to peck and strut about her.

"She still feeds her birds," said Hubert smiling.

"Have we altered so little?" questioned Enid, smiling in return.

"Malincourt always seems to me one of the permanent things in life," said Hubert. "One would resent any change in it, I believe. We like things just as they are, simply because they are part of the place. I believe even the same flowers are put in the same beds year after year. And I must admit there is a sense of repose about knowing where to find the sweet peas and the roses."

Mrs. Malincourt finished scattering the yellow grain, and came across to the place where they were sitting.

"How is Baby to-day?" she asked kindly.

It seemed to Enid that no one had ever spoken to her since the child was born without a kindly

touch of anxiety in their voices, which conveyed a suggestion that her treasure was held in no secure keeping. Sometimes she had wondered, with as much impatience as her nature was capable of feeling, whether this daily inquiry for her child's health might not be dispensed with sometimes. The variations in the little creature's condition were, as a rule, but slight, and yet the "no better" which truthfulness demanded was difficult of utterance, and touched with a fateful sound.

"Nurse is afraid she is not quite so well to-day," she replied patiently, "she slept very little last night."

"We fear," said Mrs. Malincourt in an explanatory manner to her son, "that Enid's little girl suffers much pain. One hopes, of course——"

"Yes, yes," he said quickly. "Enid was telling me about it; but children are often delicate. She must not be too anxious about it."

"Hubert finds us unchanged," said Enid, with an attempt to speak of something else than that which never for a moment left her mind. "I believe he thinks we have been living here since he left in a sort of garden of sleep, or that perhaps some fairy has turned us all to stone for four years."

The thought, lightly expressed, brought with it in its train a fantastic suggestion of what it would have been if indeed the last four years had been a sleep and a forgetting. It was difficult to imagine the peace of one long, untroubled sleep, unhaunted by a vision of pain, undisturbed by an ever-present

dread of loss. Oh, to dream and to rest—even from prayer, which had become a daily cry, a wordless, strenuous petition which ceased not day nor night. "God spare the child. Do spare her! Make her well and strong; make our darling well and strong. Lord, Thou canst do all things; Thy hand is not shortened that it cannot save. Just touch her and she shall be made whole. Other women came to Thee, Lord, and Thou didst heal their suffering sons and daughters; what Thou didst then, surely Thou wilt do now. God spare the child, take away her pain!"

Four years in a garden of sleep!

A grey-haired butler, one of the typical old-fashioned servants of the place, came out on to the terrace with the midday post, and brought some piles of letters, which he handed with pompous gravity to their various recipients.

Sir Philip followed presently with an open letter in his hand. "It is from Inez," he said, handing it to his wife. "She wants us to go to Seagrave some time and take Daisy with us." He smiled as Enid read the letter, saying, "It is very characteristic of her, is it not?"

"Dear Philip," Mrs. Bretherton wrote: "I really think that the sea air here might do Daisy good: will you bring her or send her with her nurse? I have a houseful of people staying here now, but they are all leaving next week, so Reggie and I will

be alone, thank goodness! Perpetual smiling is so tiresome. Come and stay with me, and do not be either resigned or cheerful; and, above all things, do not take yourself seriously. My guests lately have been for the most part what is called a literary set. I love them until they talk about their inner lives, and speak as though the world revolved round their little orbit.—Yours affectionately,

“INEZ BRETHERTON.”

“We must see what the doctor says about it,” said Enid, passing the letter back to her husband.

The doctor’s orders had controlled their comings and goings for the last four years. Now it was Bournemouth that was recommended, now London and a “treatment,” or again Malincourt and fresh country air. Perhaps only they themselves and a few attendants knew of one faithful journey to a little village in the Alps where miraculous cures had been effected upon children, but from which Enid’s child returned only more tired than before—more like a little white lily that has been broken and has faded in the heat of some pitiless short summer day.

Mrs. Malincourt protested against their departure, and then gave in to it, with a sense of doing the best thing for Hubert. Perhaps it was just as well, she thought, that her son should not sit on the great stone terrace beside his fair cousin for many more hot summer mornings. Also she believed that Fate had not dealt quite kindly with her in allying

her to a family who took things with so much seriousness as the Malincourts. She meant to tell her son frankly, as soon as they were alone, that she altogether disapproved of crusades and crusaders.

CHAPTER XII

SEAGRAVE looks upon the sea. It is a big house with towers and battlements set high on a wooded hill, and with a great wide cut between the trees, showing a large sweep of level blue water. Seagrave is built in so high a position that the sea, as one sees it from the grey walls of the house, always looks flat like this, flat and serene and quiet. Down by the shore where the great breakers come rolling in, one knows something of the restlessness of the ocean; but on the hillside, even on a stormy day, when the great beech-trees are tossed and waving in the gale, one looks out over the stone battlements at the end of the lawn, and there is still a straight, level line on the horizon, and the sea speaks for ever of the calm, the essential peace which distance gives.

"Perhaps some day," Enid used to think, leaning out over these grim battlements, "perhaps some day, when we look back from the distance of years, we may not see the tossing of the storms, nor hear the restlessness and deep soundings of this present life. Time, with its beautiful distance, will show us only that it was because we got too near things, too near the earth with its troubled, sea-worn shore, and too far away from heaven, that we heard the billows break and roar, and the lonely crying of the sea-

birds, and saw the sad day dawn over the tired waters, or the sun sink to rest on the troubled crest of the rolling, inconstant waves. Near things—even a patch of meadow grass—are so full of life and struggle! but distance sleeps and is at rest. From heaven we shall only see that peace which the world not only cannot give nor take away, but cannot even believe in."

Her fervent faith and determined trustfulness were touched with pitifulness to Philip; but, feeling that all love and forbearance and sympathy were hers by right, he said nothing. He joined her now where she stood looking seaward, her dress white as a gull's wing against the blue, and her fair hair hardly ruffled by the gentle stirring of the wind. A stranger, seeing these two standing together, could hardly fail to have been struck by the personal beauty of both. It was difficult to think of them, even in imagination, as the parents of the fragile child with its thin, claw-like hands and small, pinched face, its large eyes full of wonder, which lay inert and almost powerless in its cot all day.

"I want you to drive with me," said Philip, "or shall we go for a walk through the woods?"

He knew that she had been up half the night, and these little excuses for getting her to take air and refreshment were generally made by him on some personal ground, such as would appeal to her selflessness and the sweetness of her disposition.

They crossed the lawn together and went down one of the winding avenues into the coolness of the

woods, broken with a thousand shadows, laughing with a thousand lights. Here was the old castle, the Norman Seagrave, which had withstood a siege in King John's time, and now, grass-grown and lovely, remained an eternal monument to the lurid and barbaric beauty of war. Beyond were flower-grown banks and mossy glades, glimpses of hills where the dense woods were cut away, glimpses of the blue sea to southward, and everywhere a sense of life, almost of breathing life, animating each living thing. Spontaneously, generously complete, this pulsating, throbbing life of wood and sea and hill seemed to have in it something of the vibrating quality of a song. The very sky smiled down on the woods of Seagrave, and the earth answered back joyously, and tiny living things crept out from their holes to dart amongst the green, and birds flew rapturously from bough to bough, and rabbits, in the open spaces where the grass was short and sweet, sat like brown balls on the turf, or scudded with gleam of white tails into the bracken.

Oh, green old-world, blessed life, thrice blessed blue sky and salt, cool breezes blowing up from the sea below! Oh, birds that laugh at dead stones, glorying in your little hour of life, and despising the lifeless things that remain for ever! Butterflies with white wings drawing the sunshine to themselves, spoilt darlings of a summer morning; And bees that hum above the thyme, and shy, wild things that creep beneath the fern; and flashing gulls

sweeping the water with their wings! These surely show forth God's glory till He comes!

The living, the living praise Thee, not the dead, nor the maimed, nor the crippled, but perfect life, perfect joy, perfect beauty, these alone declare the glory of Thy handiwork. . . .

"And so," Philip was saying, "I think we must return to London soon; she will have to be under Sir George if there is to be another operation."

They walked on in silence till a woodland seat was reached, and, still without speaking, they seated themselves upon it.

"Philip," said Enid, "do you know that once, when I was a little girl, on a morning just like this, I was walking through a wood with my governess. The primroses and violets were all in flower, in what you know the children call Primrose Lane, and in the sunshine, just by a clump of primroses, I saw a rabbit that was being killed by a weasel. It was the first time I had ever seen anything in pain, and it haunted me for long. I used to awake and shudder in the night, thinking of the kicking mass of brown fur, and the weasel with its cruel eyes and savage mouth. And I used to wonder, in a childish rebellious sort of way, why it was that God allowed pain in the world."

A dozen arguments rose to his lips, a score of easy refutations of her simple beliefs; but they were too commonplace, too worn-out and barren, to utter to a woman in trouble. Philip had been through the barren wilderness himself. He knew by

heart the uncomfotting stock phrases which seek to explain its ugliness, and could have told her all the cut-and-dried statements on the difficult subject of the existence of evil and pain in the world. Æschylus, Pindar, Euripides, Plato, and a host of other good men and true had all given their solutions of the enigma. Their theories about the old problem were as manifold as ours are to-day. "Suffering degrades," says one. "Fortune ennobles," said another. "Misfortune is demoralising," a third says, with greater emphasis. One finds that God has not a free hand, while another cries from the depth of his despair: "Dear Zeus, I wonder at Thee!" Greeks and Hebrews and Romans all have their theories of pain. Pain is a punishment; pain is a discipline; pain is a test of worth—while honest Job cries aloud from his ash-heap: "How can God stoop to so contemptible a quarrel?" Pain is the contravention of natural law; pain is warning; pain is a proof of brotherhood; pain is atonement for sin; pain is simply a necessity; pain is a means to an end; pain is a sign that the gods are against man, and so man gets the chance to be a hero; and so on, down to our own day with its stock arguments and the piously-manufactured opinions which Philip had studied since his Oxford days, until he was thoroughly tired of them. But a certain fierceness and resentment seized upon him for a moment, and hurried him into speech. A grim honesty within him rebelled against hearing the things which he deemed merciless called merciful, and the actions

which he held to be cruel, or perhaps only heedless, or perhaps mere chance, glorified into tenderness and thoughtfulness on the part of some merciful Disposer of things.

"I can stand seeing a thing killed," he said shortly, and his voice had grown hard and his face was set, "but I cannot see it tortured before my eyes."

"O Philip, Philip, let us go home!" said Enid.

"They are sitting in the wood, I know," said Mrs. Bretherton, "and moping about that poor little child, as if that could do it or them any possible good! Let us go and try to find them, Reggie, and we must do something this afternoon that will take them out of themselves for a little."

"We might have tea at the old castle," said Reggie. "Uncle Philip always likes that."

"Besides, people who stay in country houses must always expect to be taken to see ruins," said his mother; "it is part of the horrible programme! But I do not think we have a turret staircase in any of the ruined towers at Seagrave. When I used to go and stay in country houses, I generally found that a visit to a ruin involved an ascent of a turret. Tell them to pack some hampers, will you, Reggie, and we will boil our kettle out of doors and eat pastry and be gay."

The boy gave the message and walked down to the woods with his mother. He was a tall, graceful lad of seventeen years old, and he looked a good

deal older than he actually was. His kindly air of protection towards his mother had something very graceful and charming about it, and Inez, for her part, made a perfectly futile attempt to conceal from the eyes of the world her passionate love of him. "I am quite aware," she used to say, "that Reggie is not a whit better than other boys, and I do not expect any one to think that he is, and because I happen to love him I see no reason why I should bore everybody by talking about him."

"In your heart of hearts," Philip used to say, smiling, "you know you think him a very good sort of fellow!"

"In my heart of hearts," Inez had replied quickly, "I know he is perfection; but that conviction, which we are pleased to locate in the mysterious region called our heart of hearts, exists for myself alone, and cannot possibly be shared by anyone else."

In any case the boy was a being upon whom much affection was lavished, and a certain gentleness became him well, as one who was son and daughter also to a mother upon whom Fate had played some ugly tricks. The tenants and neighbours were rather inclined to play at a little king-worship of the young heir, but a certain simplicity of mind, which Reggie possessed in no small degree, saved him from any vanity or any self-consciousness in his position.

"We've got Seagrave, and they haven't," he used to say to his mother when he was a little boy, "so of course we ought to be nice to them." The love

of the big, old, battlemented house was the passion of his life. He had seen it when he was a child, and he had dreamed of it, and its drawing-rooms and wide corridors and the great expanse of sea beneath it, for years afterwards. Then had come the happy year when his father was at home, and he had ridden everywhere with him over the property, making friends with every man and child on the estate, and glorying in holidays spent in the old ruined castle, searching for birds' nests in the thorn-trees in the empty moat, or filling the place with stories of knights and ladies, and trying to discover the guard-room and the chapel, or to piece together fragments of flooring and portions of wall, to build again in imagination the great castle which Cromwell had destroyed. The place was his now in the very fullest sense, for he was keeping it and taking care of it for one who, alas! had himself to be watched and guarded. His father's weakness and inability to control his own affairs appealed strongly to his chivalry. Always, during the year that he was at home, he had striven to know his mind in this thing or that, in case he might have to be taken from them again. And now everything that was done to the estate was done for one purpose only, to please a solitary man, sitting sullen and unheeding in his rooms in a distant asylum, or wandering about a walled garden, morose and silent, his keeper by his side.

"It's so hard on him," the boy used to say, "so awfully hard; but when he comes home again he'll

find the place just as he would like it to be, and he will get well when he is older—the Brethertons always get all right when they are older."

Inez had never made any mystery about his father's illness; she believed that to do so might have a morbid effect upon her son. The thing was as frankly and openly discussed as though it had been scarlet fever or the gout. "And really, there is no mystery about it," Inez would often say, in her light way; "the most delicate part of our organism becomes affected, and certain results show themselves in the particular sphere of these organisms. Were the muscles of Tom's legs affected he would walk lame; as his brain is affected, he has hallucinations, and persons who see anything weird or strange in this are mere sensation mongers who show their ignorance of the primary laws of pathology. And where can the line be drawn between sanity and insanity? Someone once defined sanity as a sense of limitations. Therefore, to aspire infinitely—to be a genius—is necessarily to be mad. . . . To desire infinitely is also madness. The man who thinks he owns the whole of New York is shut up in a lunatic asylum. Why shut up within four walls those whose desires have become fixed ideas? The Christian's heaven itself is an insanity—a place where all wishes shall be fulfilled."

"I wonder," she was saying to her son as they walked down the hillside, "whether you could persuade the Osbornes to come with us this afternoon, to break the monotony of a family party, and tell

them to bring their psychic friend with them, who sees ghosts and warlocks and spooks."

"Awful rot, that sort of thing!" said Reggie, with the schoolboy's wholesome scorn for what he could not understand. But when the small picnic party assembled at the castle, he looked with interest at a pale woman with light eyes who came with their neighbours to have tea in the ruins.

"Would you care about seeing over the old place?" he said, with that curious mixture of the schoolboy and the elderly gentleman in his manner which somehow made him so attractive. "We all know every stone of the castle, of course, and are inclined to think it very interesting; but I don't know if a stranger would care for it as much as we do."

He showed her the great stone walls and turrets, and the keep with its square-shouldered doorways and windows, relic of Edward VI's time, its Tudor banqueting-halls, and its great stone fire-places and wide chimneys through which the sunlight descended in a shaft of light.

Miss Sturgess appeared absent-minded and restless. She was leaning her back against the massive masonry of the walls. The enclosed space formed a huge yard, turf-grown and covered with earth to the depth of several feet, and thickly sown with nettles in some of the less frequented corners.

"The chapel stood there," she said, pointing to a strip of turf beneath some yew-trees.

"Oh, do you know about these things?" said Reggie, delighted.

"I say very little of what I know," said Miss Sturgess; she spoke in a curious, level voice, very high pitched, and not melodious, though when she sang, the tone and quality of the voice were deep and powerful.

"It would be very nice if you would tell us all you know of the old ruins," said Reggie. "My father and I dug here for a long time last summer, when he was—when he was better, you know. But we could never find the chapel, although we unearthed quite a number of treasures in our search—old spurs, and things like that, and a pair of quaint old shoe-buckles, which my uncle says date from King Charles's time."

Miss Sturgess made no reply, but gazed, with a curious, fixed look, straight in front of her.

"I'm afraid it cannot interest you much, these family histories of ours," said Reggie apologetically. He laughed and added, "I've bored you dreadfully, I'm afraid."

Then the high, level voice of Miss Sturgess began to speak, while the curious light eyes still had a distant, glassy look. "I hear the sound of war," she said. "Oh, there have been terrible deaths and crimes within these walls, and a woman who wears a long peaked cap suffered much at the hands of a man, and found no redress to the day of her death."

"Reggie, tea is ready," called Mrs. Bretherton's voice; "will you tell Miss Sturgess."

"Mother, do come," said Reggie hastening to her, and drawing her by the arm. "She tells one wonderful tales. She knows where the chapel is, and sees all sorts of queer things." His mother followed, and they came to the stone wall hung with green plants and ferns, where they found Miss Sturgess standing like a sleep-walker, her eyes open, but she herself evidently only half conscious.

"There is a fire over there," she said; "a terrible fire, blazing up from the trees!" She gave a slight scream and covered her face with her hands. She looked round her in a bewildered fashion. "I do not want to see anything more, I do not want to!" She spoke consciously again, and turning to Mrs. Bretherton in a conventional way, and with a curious drop in her voice, said, "Did you call me? Is tea ready?"

"Tea is quite ready," said Mrs. Bretherton gravely.

"I cannot stay here," said Miss Sturgess nervously; "the place is full—crowded! May I go? Shall you mind if I leave you?"

"We should be very sorry if you left without having some tea," said Inez, deliberately prosaic. "I daresay," she said, "that the Osbornes told you that this castle was inhabited in the fourteenth century."

"Yes, they told me," said Miss Sturgess.

"I wonder," said Inez, smiling, "if that accounted for the fact that the lady in your vision had a high-peaked cap of that period?"

"I do not try to convince anyone," said Miss

Sturgess simply. "I see these things; sometimes I say what I see, but not often. Yes, I will come and have tea. . . . I wonder if you will think of me when the fire comes and blazes above the trees in the wood?"

Mrs. Bretherton was annoyed; anything like trances or visions or second-sight were connected, in her mind, with the weakest and most fatuous type of woman. She was pitiless towards clairvoyants and palmists, crystal-gazers, and the like. She led the way deliberately towards the interior of the old banqueting-hall, where tea was spread, and, perhaps with a view to giving no encouragement to Miss Sturgess, she deliberately placed her between the two Miss Osbornes, who were already so silly that she did not fear any mental disturbance for them.

Mrs. Bretherton's teas were luxurious, as were all the arrangements of her household. The hampers under the old walls had provided tea and iced coffee and various sorts of refreshment.

"And the sad part of it is," Mrs. Bretherton was saying, "that Enid is always serenely unconscious of what she is eating!"

Philip smiled good-naturedly. "Your famous cook," he said, "was always a vanity of yours."

"But indeed," said Enid eagerly, "I am enjoying this bread and butter very much indeed; it is delicious!"

"My complaint against you," said Mrs. Brether-ton, "is that you are unaware that those *pâté-de-*

foie-gras sandwiches are much nicer. Epicures, you know, despise a want of taste in food as artists despise a want of taste in pictures. It really grieves me sometimes when Enid dines with me and goes away without ever having realised that my dinner—Josef's dinner—was something of a work of art. Our little world in London, you know," she continued, turning to her brother, "says that you live on pulse."

"Oh, is that for your complexions?" said one of the Miss Osbornes. She gazed admiringly at Lady Gurney's clear colouring, and added, "Is it very nasty?"

"Do I hear some one shouting?" said Mrs. Bretherton, starting up. "It isn't a tourist's day, is it? No one is up here but ourselves."

"It is from the vault!" exclaimed Miss Sturgess, and she was the first to run to the place from which the cries came.

"Take care!" shouted Philip to his wife, "don't come any nearer. There's been a slip here, and someone must have fallen down!" He went forward cautiously on hands and knees, and saw a lad, the scamp of the village, who had been trespassing and birds'-nesting, standing on a narrow ledge of crumbling earth far beneath. As he leaned forward to give assistance, the loose earth began to fall into vacant space, and the imprisoned lad sank a foot or two lower, yet without entirely loosening his foot-hold.

"For God's sake help me, Sir Philip!" he cried out piteously.

"The hole seems to go far below him," said Sir Philip. "Hold on, my boy!"

"I believe I could get at him," said Reggie. "I am lighter than you are, Uncle Philip." He was lying upon his face looking down into the great chasm that yawned beneath them. It had been filled up with stones and rubble which had now sunk, loosened by weeks of unusually heavy rains, exposing a great hole with crumbling sides.

"I believe it's the old passage to the sea!" exclaimed Reginald. "Let me get on to that first ledge; I know it would hold me, and I could give him a hand up." The boy beneath them was only some twenty feet below the level of the ground.

"Reginald," said Mrs. Bretherton, "I forbid you to go."

"Inez," said Philip, "the boy is in imminent danger of his life, and that first foothold would certainly bear Reggie's weight. At any rate we can knot some clothing together and give him some support; with his light weight that ledge would not give way."

"I forbid him to move!" said Mrs. Bretherton.

"Oh, Mrs. Bretherton," said Dorothy Osborne, wringing her hands, "do let Reggie go! I am sure that poor boy is slipping again: I can hear the stones falling. And look at these sash-ribbons and things which we can tie together; it will make a

rope strong enough for one of his weight; but Sir Philip is so tall and heavy."

Mrs. Bretherton turned sharply upon her. "My son," she said, "shall not risk his life to save the life of any one who breathes."

"You are not heroic, Inez," said Philip quietly.

"I am not heroic," said Mrs. Bretherton in a dry, hard voice, "but I mean to keep what I have got."

"You go, Philip," said Enid.

"Keep back," said Philip; "the edges are crumbling, I think."

Enid's face had grown white, and her hands were tightly locked together. She tore a cloak she wore into strips and knotted these into a stout line with Dorothy Osborne's sash ribbons and some pieces of rope that lay with the hampers. Philip threw off his coat and placed it at the firmest edge of the chasm to prevent the friction of the stones on the improvised rope. His face had on it that curious smile that comes on the faces of some men in a moment of danger. "Will you," he said courteously, "hold on to this?" The two terrified girls and Reggie, standing back from the edge of the hole, planted their heels in the soft turf, and Philip stood for a moment, the rope of broad ribbons and women's materials round his waist, his coat and waistcoat flung aside, and his head bare. The boy's voice now sounded from somewhere far down the hole, and the fall of stones was distinctly audible above.

"I'm coming," said Philip, and clinging to the

turf of the surface he dropped lightly to the first ledge, some ten or twelve feet below. Ah! the strain on the rope had begun, the ledge must have given way under his weight. It would be fatal to go nearer the edge and ascertain what had happened, for the stones, loosened by the recent wet weather, would doubtless fall and injure both the boy and his rescuer.

"Can you hold?" shouted his voice from below.

"Yes," said Inez, with her face set and her hands straining at the rope. Probably she received almost the whole of her brother's weight on her own arms. She stood nearest the pit, and seemed jealous of allowing any one of them to bear even a portion of the weight.

Very suddenly the strain on the rope ceased, and Dorothy Osborne, flinging down her end of it, cried out, amid a torrent of tears, "It has broken, the rope has broken!" Mrs. Bretherton and the rest still held on, though the strain was relaxed.

"Shout if you are safe!" cried Inez.

"I've found another ledge, I think; can you slack away some more rope? The boy is still a long way below."

They played out the rope to its utmost length, and Reginald crept carefully forward on his stomach, to put the tweed coat which was acting as a fender more carefully on the rocky edge of the chasm.

"I can see him," he called out to his mother, "but I cannot see the boy. He has lit a match, but it has

gone out immediately. The air must be horribly foul down there!"

"Come back, Reggie!" said Mrs. Bretherton imperiously; "you are wanted here to hold the rope." Reggie returned and took his place, and the strain began again.

"Can you haul away?" shouted Philip from below. His voice sounded far away and hollow, as though he were speaking down a long tube. "Be as quick as you can. The air is very bad."

The four women and Reggie bent their backs to haul at what was now a dead weight at the end of the rope. Inez was working like a man. On her powerful wrists the muscles stood out like cords, and her strong, plain face was set in determined lines. It was she who went forward to the lip of the chasm, where the stones were loose and dangerous, to help the boy at last to the surface. It was her quick, capable hands which untied the rope from him and let it down again, while she called to one of the younger girls to loose the boy's neck-cloth, and fetch water from the well to pour over him. "While you are there," she said, as Dorothy Osborne sped across the turf, "do look again and see if by any chance anyone is passing along the drives, and call to them to come. Shout loudly; there may be some foresters working in the woods."

Mrs. Bretherton crept nearer to the edge and paid out the rope again. "Call when you are ready for us to pull," she shouted into the earth, but no answer came. "He must have fainted," said Mrs.

Bretherton; and Enid seized the rope and began to tie it round her waist. "Are you mad?" said Inez.

"Oh, if only we had some man here—some man," sobbed Dorothy Osborne.

"I believe I hear a cart," said Miss Sturgess.

Dorothy flew to the castle steps. "Come, do come!" they heard her voice entreating, and two woodmen returning from felling trees in the wood, and with ropes round their shoulders, followed her to the great hole in the courtyard of the castle.

"Wait, wait, Lady Gurney," shouted Dorothy, for Enid had already approached to the edge of the vault.

In a second the two workmen had stretched a log across the crumbling surface of the chasm, and from its secure position one of them slowly let down his fellow into the darkness of the pit. "There have been steps here once, a spiral staircase of sorts, I fancy; give me my hatchet, Jim, and I'll get a foot-hold here and there, I believe."

They handed him a short axe from the tools that lay on the turf, and the heavy rope, twisted once more round the log, began to pay out as the man's weight descended.

"The air is pretty bad, he says," said the workman, "and I doubt but we'll have to haul 'em both out together, if we are to get them alive to the surface."

It seemed an eternity until the woodman gave signs of hauling up the rope. There was absolute

stillness now within the great turf-grown court of the castle—only little Dorothy Osborne's frightened sobbing could be heard. Inez, with hands already strained, was standing by the rope waiting for the first summons, ready to help in the task of lifting the two buried men from their horrible position. Enid stood near her; her face, in its fixed control, looking as if it had been carved in stone. "Are you ready?" shouted the woodman to his companion down below: no answer.

"I believe, ma'am," he said turning to Inez, "from the way the rope moved, that he has been able to tie it round Sir Philip and himself, but that he is past speaking now. Shall we risk it and haul?"

"Yes," said Inez in her voice of firm decision, the voice which never faltered whether a decision was right or wrong. They bent to the rope, and hauled with all their might.

"I think we have them both, by the weight of the rope," said the woodman. Great beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead as he planted his feet more firmly and pulled with all his strength.

"They must be nearly a hundred feet down," he said, "by the length of the rope." And the burden came slowly upwards.

The boy, who lay on the turf, began to revive and scrambled giddily to his feet. He tried to lend a hand with the rest, but soon sank to the ground again, dazed and faint. "There are some bits of steps near the top, any way," he said, "which I think will hold you for a bit, if you could go a few steps

down and keep them from the edge as they come up."

The woodman, with his hand on the rope, began to descend a little. "I think they are both here," he shouted up, "and the air isn't bad where I am. Pull gently, I've got them! Now, if one of you could lie across the log and give me a hand! It's quite safe, my lady, if you put your foot just there, where that bit of stone is, and lean over just to keep his head away from the log."

Enid stretched out her arm until she could lock her hand in the neck of her husband's shirt. Was he dead or alive? She did not know. The woodman lifted him up and, the strain being now less on the rope, one of the women and Reggie gave their assistance in raising him into the light and air again. Dorothy Osborne, with her jug of water, sprinkled his face, while the others succeeded in raising the second workman in the same way, across the log on to the firm ground. The man, whose stay in the living tomb had been shorter than Sir Philip's, was the first to recover. Philip still lay like one dead; but Enid, laying her hand upon his heart, said, "It still beats."

"If he had died," said Mrs. Bretherton to her sister-in-law as they sat that night in the drawing-room, "you would, of course, have known that I had sacrificed your husband's life instead of my son's. I ought, of course, to say that I am sorry; and I should do so, were I not perfectly aware that,

were the thing to occur again, I should act as I did this afternoon." There had been a disturbance and some emotion in the affairs of the day, and in inward protest against these Mrs. Bretherton spoke more lightly and scathingly than usual.

"Dear Inez," protested Enid, "motherhood is very strong."

"And womanhood is very weak," said Inez. "Enid, I am glad Philip is the one, if one of them had to suffer, instead of my son. I thought I loved my brother, but I am infinitely relieved that it is he who is lying weak and ill up there instead of Reggie."

Enid rose swiftly and, with a gesture of affection, laid her hand upon the other woman's shoulder. "I am glad too, Inez," she said. "Reggie was too young for a deed of daring like this."

Inez gave a short laugh. "I see myself as I am!" she said; "a Pagan, or a savage, or what you will; but I don't tell lies even to myself! My life is a hard one, and I will not make it one whit harder if I can help it. I shall keep what I have got, or fight for it at least! Good-night. You will want to go and sit by Philip, and I am going to bed."

CHAPTER XIII

THE same week, although it was still bright summer weather, the big, cool house in London was thrown open, and the Gurneys returned thither with their child and its attendants and nurses. There was another period of anxious watching after an operation had been performed on the little girl, followed by a visit to Brighton to try to bring some colour into her pale cheeks, and so back to London again in the early autumn, when Hubert Malincourt came to pass a few weeks with them.

Malincourt looked fatigued, and his lectures on Macedonia, his pamphlets and appeals, absorbed him. His energy and absorption, his matter-of-fact way of taking for granted that everybody would be glad to work as strenuously and devotedly as he himself did, were characteristic of the times in which he lived.

This was the age of work—of endeavour. *Labore rare est orare* was its motto, and strenuousness its catchword. No one had leisure. Even the old gibe at the idle rich was kept as a platform utterance when subject-matter fell short. The rich worked harder than the poor. Nearly everyone knew, by personal experience, the meaning of a nervous breakdown. Grey hairs came early, and beautiful

young women lost their looks in the hurry of committee meetings, hot rooms, and charitable-account keepings.

It was an age of halls and big audiences. Halls must be full, and lectures were common. Everyone must speak. Every subject was aired and exploited; lecturers were in demand, and all must attend meetings, with the proviso that they must sit near the door and "slip away" to something else before the end was over.

Time had become a tyrant; to overtake it became a matter of racing. The faster one lived, the faster became modes of transit and means of communication. The day of the swiftest horse was over, a mounted messenger was a thing of the past; even the telegraph was voted cumbersome and out of date, and ships made record runs and air-machines record flights.

Everything became possible! If one did not actually visit the stars, one yet might very possibly be able to speak with their inhabitants some day in the near future. If one did not actually fly round the world in a whirlwind, one loved to sit in the centre of the storm and to hear the mad rush of its wings.

Accelerated speed and tremendous outputs became the measure of success in all things. The grass itself did not grow quickly enough; its fruitfulness was doubted because it made no noise. Nothing was believed in that did not advertise itself or that moved quietly. Manufactories which before had turned out goods by the thousand, now

turned them out by the million, and roared that they did so. The earth itself must submit to intensive culture, in much the same way as children's heads must be crammed with knowledge and yield an abnormally produced stock of mere facts on examination days.

The air was thick with smoke, and men and women lived in the clamour of flying shuttles, rattling looms, and the roar of steam-driven machinery. Quiet villages caught the echo of the stir, and emptied themselves into the towns to hear the clash of the music. They also must join in the race.

News must be brief and quickly obtained. Study gave place to information at a glance. Worship in churches must be brief; it produced fidgets unless the choir sang briskly. The sermon must not occupy more than ten minutes. We must catch trains or taxi-cabs. Pace at any price!

Old Time laughed aloud at the hurry, and showed a youthful face behind his mask. He had dropped his scythe and his hour-glass, and owned a motor-mowing-machine and a chronometer.

"They are trying to clip my wings," he cried, "and forget that I have an aeroplane! They used to hear my chariot wheels thundering behind them and trembled. Now I send them Marconigrams and they do not even hear them coming!"

Every life was "full"; things moved quickly, but brains were quicker still. Even the sick could hardly stop to rest; they preferred, as they often said, to run until they dropped. Only churchyard

stones had moss upon them, and churchyard stones were avoided as long as possible. Everything must be interesting, and everything must be quick. Even rest cures had become strenuous. The symbols of the day were writing-tables piled with printed and written matter, engagement books black with entries, trembling muscles, perhaps, and wakeful sleep.

Everything must be attempted. An hour to this and half an hour to that! It was an age of duty, yet one in which thought was dubbed morbid. We must improve everything that existed; we must improve our brethren, or, at least, shake them up. We must expose grievances or manufacture them. Above all things we must work and not think!

There was honour in this age of clean, bright, steel with never a scrap of rust on it, and roaring furnaces and blinding smoke. Men opened their windows to the reek of it, and called it fresh air, and when they left it they were half inclined to say to themselves, "Well done."

Hardly anyone in the large centres of the world was able to resist the influence of the age. Hubert Malincourt was in request for lectures, and his tireless example of filling every grudging minute was inspiring.

Enid took up her work in the East End again, and Philip, while regretting that this seemed to be the prescribed limit of devotion and the accepted outlet for enthusiasm, was loath to put any hin-

drance in the way of an occupation so consoling and so stimulating. His own art absorbed him daily more and more, and was itself touched with the strenuousness of the time.

"Never did I know or guess," he thought to himself with amusement, "that work was to be the explanation of all things—the cure for all ills!"

He knew that nothing in the way of minor comforts or consolation would appeal to his wife—a dinner at a crowded restaurant with its smoke-dimmed air, and clashing band and hurrying waiters, and the hot smell of food, might amuse other women, but it would not afford the smallest distraction to her. The theatre with its mirthless burlesques appealed to neither of them, and contrasted poorly beside an evening spent together in Philip's studio. He remembered, with that thrill of affection with which he always recalled his wife's characteristics, how one night, during the worst of their child's illness, when her life was despaired of, a watchful nurse had entreated her to lie down upon the sofa, and had offered to put eau-de-cologne upon her head. "It is kind of you, Nurse," his wife had said, "but I do not think that little cures are of much use to me." She had "taken to work" like everyone else.

Hubert, meanwhile, had postponed his departure from England, for the Geographical Society had invited him to give an account of his travels in the form of a lecture, and he asked his cousin's assist-

ance and counsel in preparing for it, and in arranging photographs and sketches.

"Hubert," she said, as she read over his notes, "I hardly realised what a traveller you had been! This is splendid! Tell us more about it; a lecture cannot half contain that we wish to hear. Write a book and take the world with you into these places, and tell them and us what you have done."

He arranged his copious notes and diaries as best he could; and the evenings spent in Philip's vaulted carving studio, with its warm hangings and great log fires, contained hours of vivid interest for them all. There were gaps in the accounts of his travels to be filled up—"I was down with fever at this time and could not write"; and again, there were explanations to be made to throw light on one situation or another.

The task was not a light one; but the interest of preparing it for the press and getting the lecture into shape was work enough for many winter evenings. Philip left his tools and cleared a big, leather-covered table with capacious drawers to hold the manuscript, advised and arranged, and even set himself to the task of making woodcuts of Malincourt's slight sketches.

"In the near future," he said to his wife, "I see each of us with a latch-key on a steel chain bustling up to the door of the house, and grudging the moment it might take for a servant to answer to our knock. We shall begin to snap our watch-cases soon. I shall get bald perhaps, and we shall begin

to 'speak' and show other signs of nervous disease. Hubert, who is the one person in the world who has been able to persuade me to buy a motor-car, is to blame for it all, and Macedonia is to blame for him."

"I am told," said Hubert, "that Murray, who was Consul at one time at Monastir, is giving one of the Guthrie lectures at Newcombe Hall. I have never met him, but I should rather like to hear what he has got to say. He is going to speak on Friday evening, I believe; shall we go to the lecture?"

"We shall not only go with you," said Philip, laughing, "but we shall consult our engagement books first to try and find out if we can 'squeeze it in.' We shall even arrive a little bit late and breathless if you prefer it."

"I see all the faults of the present rush and stir," answered Hubert good-naturedly, "but it is an age of action, Philip, and even if we have no time for thought, we are getting a few things done."

"The joy of accomplishment is very real," he said, "but I am sometimes afraid lest action should become fuss, not force."

"There is so much to be done," Hubert said excusingly.

"You would not leave a single corner of the world unexposed, or a single grievance unredressed, Hubert! But then your energy is enormous!"

"I am not working Enid too hard, am I?" he asked anxiously. "With a woman the difficulty

always is to restrain her ardour, and to make her remember her weakness."

"Incidentally," he replied, "work has been a splendid thing for her, and it was never taken up medicinally! Does it not amuse you to hear the question which is generally asked when, for instance, a girl becomes a nurse or a nun—'Had she a disappointment?' We are hardly ever able to accredit women with singleness of purpose."

"What does she think about it all?—I mean, this modern life of ours, with its enthusiasms and its bustle."

"Isn't the meaning of it not to think?" he asked.

"No, it is the result of it!" he answered sturdily. "And remember it took some thought to begin it!"

Philip became grave again. "She has not ceased to think," he said.

There was only a very little crowd round the doors of the lecture room as they drove up to Newcombe Hall, and Hubert said regretfully, "I'm afraid Murray isn't going to have much of an audience!"

"What time will the lecture be over?" asked Philip of an attendant at the door; and he ordered the motor-car to return at ten o'clock.

"My dear Philip," said Hubert, coming back into the vestibule after the motor had driven away, "I am so sorry! It is the wrong night! Murray doesn't speak till next Friday. Have you sent the footman away?"

Philip said that he had done so; and then they met Enid's friend, Mr. Treherne, the Curate of All Saints, Witham Street, who was just about to enter the hall.

"I hope my visit here will not be misunderstood," he said nervously, "but I believe one ought to hear what is being said in the world, in order to be able to help one's people."

"I do not even know what is going to be talked about," said Philip, smiling, when Enid had recalled to his memory that the Curate was their friend whom they had met in Palestine. "We ourselves came to hear about Macedonia, but it seems we have come on the wrong night."

"It's Purcell, you know, the Ethical man. He is giving a course of lectures during the winter, and on Wednesday nights Mallow, the Theosophist, lectures."

"In my younger days," said Philip, "I remember coming here at different times to attend the lectures of a Swedenborgian, a Theist, a Theosophist, and a Quaker; while, still longer ago, Dr. Cumming's followers, I believe, waited here for the end of the world; and it was certainly the scene of socialistic meetings, and Irving lectures. If walls could speak—and one must be very thankful indeed, that they can't—one could imagine this hall being very like a telephone exchange room, where everyone's calls can be heard."

Some young men, respectably dressed, who looked like well-to-do clerks, entered at this mo-

ment, and went to the small box-office to obtain tickets. Three of the number seemed to be serious-minded youths, but the fourth had evidently come under compunction.

"How much does one pay to get to Heaven?" he asked jocosely of the man behind the window where tickets were being issued.

"We don't admit to Heaven here," said the man smartly, "but we tell you how to live on earth, and we charge a shilling for your chair, if you prefer sitting to standing."

The young fellow paid his shilling and passed on with a disconcerted giggle, and Philip, having sent a message for the motor-car, sat down with Enid and Lord Malincourt in the now fast-filling hall. The platform had some standard lamps and Japanese screens upon it, which gave to the place a curiously secular tone. There were some plants in the place of footlights, and the lecturer stood by a small table with a little bell upon it, and a tumbler of water. The lecture had begun, and the man's far-piercing, clipping voice seemed in accordance with his precise and dapper appearance. Each word was pronounced with marvellous distinctness, but the voice was raised and lowered at stated intervals in a somewhat artificial manner. As they entered, the piercing voice was pronouncing its negative message, its bare treatment of cause and effect, its formal recital of flat doctrine. There was nothing beyond conduct. A man or a woman was a good man or a good woman, or they were not good, and

there the matter ended. Every word that was uttered vibrated everlastingily, every action had its exact, well-weighed, and merited result. There was no such thing as forgiveness; nothing could ever turn the inexorable rule of cause and effect—each cause had its corresponding effect. There was no deliverance from sin; the only freedom from it was in not sinning. There was no hell, except the plain and unavoidable result of our own actions, just as there was no heaven except our own mental satisfaction, and the happy results of good living. No higher power ever interfered to promote happiness or control pain. Man was the measure of his own needs, and there was none higher than he. The only argument in favour of living well was that it brought desirable results with it. The present moment was our own, and nothing else belonged to us; the past could not be undone, and the future could not be reckoned with, but the present hour might be occupied profitably, and even with a certain amount of enjoyment, if certain rules were strictly observed. To be a good man or woman was as easy as being an expert in work or in play; it required practice and careful attention, but nothing else, and a good life was in the scope of everyone who gave his mind to it. Ethics was the only thing that lasted.

"The prophets are dead," said the piercing voice, "Krishna is *dead*, Buddha is *dead*, Christ is *dead*!"

Enid wondered what Philip thought of the preacher's address, and turned towards him to scan

his face, and caught a smile of quiet amusement on it. The execrable decorations of the hall, the tawdry platform, the standard lamps of sham gilding, with their silk-cotton shades, the paper screens, the ill-painted woodwork, and the poor windows, with their triangles of coloured glass, were engaging his undivided attention.

"Doesn't this sort of thing make you want the cathedral at home?" he whispered, as he turned with a kindly smile towards her. That the man's platitudes should distress or even affect her in any way, had hardly crossed his mind; but he believed that she might well compare the hideous attempt at art in Newcombe Hall with the cathedral at Malincourt.

Quite suddenly a vision of the quiet, beautiful old place rose before her—the hush of it and its uplifting beauty! She seemed to see again the great span of oak roof with its choir of gilded angels, the broad, quiet aisles with their springing pillars and arches, and the sunshine coming through the windows of the clerestory in broadening shafts of glory, and lighting up the grey old stones with their tender radiance. The light was always dimmed and veiled through those high clerestory windows, as though the cathedral's eyes, old and beautiful, had yet grown a little dim. She wondered if any act of man could really be said to desecrate such a building. Cromwell might stable his horses there, the mob might break the old stained-glass windows, or with rude chisel plane

down the carvings to the level of the walls, but the cathedral itself in all its unspeakable beauty would remain untouched by any of these things.

"Will the Ethical Society ever build a cathedral?" said Philip. "And why is a new religion so often connected in one's mind with hymns sung out of tune?"

They left the hall with the small crowd of plainly-dressed men and women, and got into the motor which awaited them at the door.

"Our Ethical Society preacher believes in men and women and just wages, and soap-and-water, and so do I," said Hubert, "but somehow his message was extraordinarily flat."

"Do you remember how at Eton, Hubert, after a Lent sermon in the chapel, one used to believe, with the gravity of fifteen years old, that one was going to live ever afterwards a better sort of life. And then, poor little wretches! we used to say our prayers at night, and our aspirations too often could only resolve themselves into this sort of soap-and-water business."

"I know," said Hubert eagerly. "When we came to crystallise our resolves into actions it only seemed, after all, that we were not to use cribs, or that we were to write home more regularly, and it seemed rather a poor little road for a boy of fifteen to take."

He half hoped Enid would say something in reply. Her nature was ruled by some higher influence than was easily apprehended, and he loved to hear

her faithful rejoinders to vexed questions. His cousin was quieter than usual to-night, and the gas-light from some of the lamps which they passed showed her lying back in the corner of the motor-car, her face graver than ordinary. He wondered whether she had been hurt by the crude treatment of a great subject in the Newcombe Hall lecture. For himself he, like everyone else, had heard religious opinions discussed with so much frankness that almost any attitude of mind seemed conceivable, and freedom of thought, even if it merged dangerously near blasphemy, had yet often the sanction of a search for truth in it. Philip, he knew, was hardly conscious of anything but the grotesqueness of the meeting with its Americanisms and its tuneless choir. But as he looked at Enid in the dim recess of the car, he seemed to understand why some people crossed themselves at the mention of an oath or a blasphemous word. He hoped nothing had hurt her, but could find no clue to her mood.

CHAPTER XIV

MR. TREHERNE was giving an afternoon party in the parish hall; he was giving it before Lent should begin. He called his party a social gathering, and his invitations were couched in an attractive form. But, alas, Mr. Treherne's conscience (a most troublesome one) never could resist urging him to conceal a pill in the jam which he so bountifully offered, so generously and so unselfishly prepared for his poorer brethren. Mr. Treherne inserted a clause in his invitations that before the tea-party there would be a temperance meeting in the parish hall, when a short address would be delivered by Mrs. Mott, and several well-known ladies and gentlemen would occupy the platform. Mr. Treherne sent forth his doves in the shape of three hundred and fifty printed cards with all hopefulness and a longing that they would alight on some fair ground. So far, the doves had not returned with any specific message, but, assuring himself that it is a fashion amongst many classes of persons in various quarters of London not to answer their invitations, Mr. Treherne was not surprised.

At half-past four in the afternoon, tea, with a certain form of dry cake, indivorceable from a clergyman's tea, and known by the name of "penny

sponges," was prepared in the study for the platform guests. Mrs. Mott arrived in a cab. Her pale, enthusiastic eyes saw a possible convert in every face that she met in the East End of London, and she had brought some hundreds of tracts with her to distribute at the door of the hall at the close of the meeting. Four or five ladies and gentlemen came down to Bethnal Green by train, most of them hurried, and nearly all of them remarking, as they entered the study, that they must be excused for running away as soon as the meeting should be over.

"I hope they are going to be punctual," said the breathless ladies and gentlemen, glancing at their watches.

"I hope so, indeed," said the Curate, with his best smile. It was a smile which Mr. Treherne kept exclusively for such meetings as these, and it was the most joyous of all his smiles. He was under the firm conviction that it helped to carry things through. He smiled as he offered his guests penny sponges, and he smiled as he regretted the damp weather; he smiled as he poured out tea, and he smiled as he handed chairs. There was a waiting woman in a cotton dress who was frequently addressed as "Mrs. Sims-would-you-mind" and who helped in the distribution of cups. Mrs. Sims was an alarming-looking lady, and a certain dogged expression which she wore may have accounted for the affix to her name.

"Mrs. Sims, would you mind stepping across to

the hall, and seeing if anyone has come yet?" said the Curate. "Our people are not as punctual as one could wish," he remarked addressing his visitors; "but what could one expect in their hard lives?" Mr. Treherne expected nothing from his East-End parishioners. To be frank, he spoilt them all, and treated them with an indulgence which he never would have dreamed of showing to any other class of person. Did they use bad language, their want of education was to be blamed for it; did they drink, the cause could be traced to their crowded rooms; did they steal, times were hard, and they hardly realised, perhaps, what they were doing. If his guests were late, there was, as Mr. Treherne said, every excuse for them. He preached conduct to them every Sunday of his life, and excused them throughout the rest of the week for their many lapses from it.

Mrs. Sims returned to say that "no one hadn't arrived yet," and she said it with the thinly-veiled disguise which covered Mrs. Sims' opinion that the Curate was "more fool he" to expect it.

"I am so sorry," said the Curate, smiling nervously. Was it possible that his people were going to desert him? Nearly a hundred of them had come to the social gathering last year in response to five hundred invitations, but there had been no mention of a temperance meeting beforehand. Surely they might allow him to say a few words on the subject so near his heart, when tea and buns, and even cold ham, were to be so freely dispensed afterwards?

Mrs. Mott looked at her watch. She wore a heavy velvet mantle trimmed with fur, and her hands were covered with rings. She believed that the ragged women in the East End liked her to appear in handsome clothes when she came to speak to them, and it is tolerably certain that they did so. Whether it improved them morally, as Mrs. Mott believed it did, is as much a question of doubt as any question which deals with social problems.

"I think I'll go over and see for myself," said Mr. Treherne, speaking hopefully, as though his keen eyes might detect an audience in the bare hall where Mrs. Sims had failed to discover one.

No one had arrived, and the Curate stood on the steps of the hall for some minutes in the hope of hailing a friend to come inside. "Come along, come along, Mrs. Jennings," he said to a passer-by, "you've got your ticket surely, and are coming in?"

"Well, sir, if you'll excuse me, I'll come later," said Mrs. Jennings, concealing the family pot of beer under her cloak, and hurrying home with it.

"Now then, Thomas!" said the Curate, forcibly arresting a young fellow who passed, laying his hand with overdone cordiality on the other's shoulder, "we are not going to let you escape! Why, we've got half a dozen ladies and gentlemen down to talk to you this evening. You are not going to let them speak to empty benches, surely?" He marched the young fellow into the empty parish hall with playful firmness, and bade him say to all

comers that he, the Curate and his friends, would be back in a minute. He returned to his teapot and his friends, and asked Mrs. Sims if she would mind fetching a little hot water. . . . "O Lady Gurney, I'm so glad you've come! This is delightful!" The Curate ran up his parochial salute mast high and flourished it in his hopeful way. "Now we are all here," he said delightedly. "And I think the audience is beginning to collect." (How was he to know that Thomas had escaped?) "We must give them five minutes more, I think," he went on nervously, "and then I'd better run over again and see how we are getting on."

He met Mrs. Sims returning with the hot water, and to her he said, with that outward firmness which sometimes marked his treatment of the lady, "I think that is all we shall require, and then, would you mind coming over to the parish hall and sitting there? The people are rather unpunctual." He looked hopefully at Mrs. Sims' ample figure, which might reasonably be expected to occupy the space usually devoted to two persons, and added smiling, "Every little helps to fill up, you know, Mrs. Sims."

"Oh, I don't mind trying to look like four," replied his servitor, "and I wish the people weren't so backward for your sake, sir."

"I got Thomas to come in just now," said the Curate hopefully, "and if only we could get the people to be more punctual the benches would soon fill up, I'm sure."

None of his people ever were punctual. When

the day's work was done and the Curate was at last enjoying a pipe in his armchair by the fire, persons whom he had told to call an hour or even two hours earlier would appear and would want an audience with him. The Curate never refused to see them. If they did not come when they liked, with their babies to be christened or their requests for confirmation, probably they would not come at all. "And we must have them baptized and confirmed at any price," the Curate used to say. His parishioners always had an advantage over him, for, while he agonised to reform them, they were absolutely indifferent as to whether they were reformed or not. Also, alas! there was a prevailing feeling in his district that the Curate was their drudge, and consequently they worked him at all times as it suited them, with very little regard for his tired legs or his sometimes aching head. "After all," he would say patiently, "there is so much excuse for them!" He said it even when, as on this afternoon, not one of those who were bidden had come to his Temperance Meeting. He walked, with his usual rapid steps, to the small house of a large family that he knew in a neighbouring street—a family which never failed him on an emergency, and which, it may be said at once, he never failed to reward, and these he collected and led with him to the parish hall.

"Could some of your Sisters come?" he said distractedly, bursting in on the working Sisters' tea in the little red brick mission-house. "Several la-

dies and gentlemen have arrived, and I'm afraid our audience is taking a long time to collect; perhaps you could spare one of your maids to come also, and I thought if you were to stand at the door whilst I finish giving our friends their tea, you might induce a few people to come in."

The Sisters, with exemplary patience, put down their teacups and went over to the hall, gathering upon their way thither several passers-by whom they knew, and bringing them to the lecture with them. The Curate could be seen gesticulating from the steps of the clergy house. "How many are there?" he said to the Sister who crossed the road to speak to him. "Fourteen," she said hopefully, "but I think more are coming."

To many minds the prevailing element of East London is its sadness, and people hardly seem to realise how many happy lives are spent there. Whitechapel Road on a warm summer evening, with its gas lamps, its vendors of fruit and fried fish, its groups of people chatting on the pavement, may not seem a particularly favoured or delightful place to the man or the woman who has spent the afternoon sitting in a green chair in the Park, but then, the green chair in the Park might not strike the East-Enders as altogether an amusing or delightful spot. A crowd, looked on as a whole, will probably always convey a suggestion of sadness with it, but the honest student of humanity refuses to draw artificial lines between the crowds of the East and the crowds of the West.

Enid Gurney walked to the window of the place where she sat, and looked out into the street. The hurrying crowds with their restless movements and their apparently objectless excursions to and fro seemed to lack purpose. Their faces bore the stamp of care and hard work upon them. But, most emphatically, it was not the stamp of tragedy. Even in their Hyde Park meetings and processions or strikes, how good-natured they were, how responsive to humour, how willing to help one another.

There seemed to be a deep, ineradicable instinct for happiness in humanity, and one saw evidence of it even in East London. Strange, that here the problem was not of the existence of pain, but of the existence of obstinate happiness.

Four years ago Enid had come to a tea like this with Inez Bretherton, and Inez had discussed sociology with her in her bright, sarcastic tone, likening the dense concourse of people whom they passed in the crowded thoroughfares of the East End to a procession of ants without the ants' purposefulness or intelligence. She had hardly troubled to answer then, certainly not to refute her arguments. With almost passionate joy she was looking forward to having her child, and, living in a sunny haze of faith and hope, there seemed to her then to be a beneficent ordering of all things in the world. Now it seemed to her that to insist upon the prevalence and persistence of happiness conveyed a sense of fatigue with it. In an almost daily fight with suffering, a daily encounter with fear, it was not

that one isolated circumstance of pain had unduly influenced her, but that a child's unmerited suffering had bidden her consider the problem of it. Her little girl's painful existence was not worse than that of many others in hospitals and elsewhere, it was simply one small part of the aggregate of suffering in the world. Her questioning became universal rather than particular, and she wondered whether she or those about her saw things as they really existed. Had ease or discomfort, joy or happiness, the more favoured conditions for their existence?

The bustling preparations for tea, and the bright talk in the interior of the room where she stood, went on, and she felt glad when the meal was over and she could join the humble crowd who had begun to assemble upstairs. She looked beautiful in a certain unconscious, royal way, as she entered the white-washed parish hall, with its flaring gas-lamps and rows of uncompromising benches. Some rough navvies at the door of the hall stepped off the pavement to allow her to pass—in a more poetic country or among a more superstitious nation she might almost have been worshipped as a Madonna.

Pending the arrival of Mr. Treherne's guests she walked down the little street where Mrs. Smith lived, and knocked at the door to inquire news of Milly Cobb. She found the quiet woman in her neat and decent parlour, but Milly was no longer with her.

"I never despair," Mrs. Smith was saying, "one could not live in East London if one allowed oneself even a small use of the word; but Milly has been a difficult girl, and, as you know, I exercise no special restraint upon them here, but merely see what kindness and love will do for them. When they are unhappy they are easily managed, but Milly's high spirits hardly ever flag, and I suppose the confines of my little house were too straight for her. She still ostensibly calls this her home, but I have not now seen her for more than a week. Milly has taken to going to public-houses and penny gaffs again, and although one hesitates to say that she is thoroughly enjoying them, she likes them better than she likes my little house with its early hours. She will come back, I think; many of them come back, when they have got tired of the husks which swine eat."

"I know you did for her all that could be done," interposed Enid. Mrs. Smith's face appealed to her strongly and reminded her of a picture which she had once seen in Florence, of Courage, not standing defiant with sword drawn, but seated, dogged and determined, with the sense of a spirit undisturbed beneath the fret of outward blows.

"One does not appeal to reason in them," Mrs. Smith said, "because reason is almost wholly absent; but there is generally a gleam of spirit, which one calls soul, which may be developed. In Milly's case one is dealing with unusual physical strength. I have never known her tired, and although she is

frequently in a rage of temper she is never out of spirits. Some outlet must be found for this vitality, and Milly finds it in the public-house, or in rough blows and street songs. Motherhood will be the only taming process for such as her. Societies which aim at refining her type are appealing to something which is non-existent."

"And yet you don't despair?" questioned Enid.

"No," said the woman, who never wasted words, "even when she is horribly happy I never despair."

"I hope Mr. Treherne will get some one to come and hear him, pore gentleman," said one poor woman near the door, sympathetically; "for the ~~curate~~ ain't a bit of 'arm in 'im, that's what I've said all along of the Curate; but as for these temperance lectures, I don't know what good is to come ~~out~~ at them! If a man's own sense don't tell him that he's a fool to spend his money on a gulp of spirit ~~that leaves~~ that leaves 'is mouth dry, and burns up 'is inside, and makes 'im turn from 'is vittles as though they was pisen—well, I don't know what is to teach 'em! If their own dry mouths don't speak a lesson to them, who else will? And sickness! well, there! Ladies don't know about these things."

"I'm afraid it's not only they who suffer," said Enid, "but their homes and wives and children as well."

"Yes," admitted the woman, "but that don't teach a man, you see. A man is taught by his own feelings and not by the feelings of 'is wife and children. And if the drink made them feel well and

strong in a way you could understand them having it, even suppose their families was to go in rags, for men are made that way and you can't order it no different. But, bless you, they're all shaking and shivering of a morning when they have had a bit of a burst, and feeling as if they had hardly a skin to cover 'em, being that cold and low. They can't settle to their work, and they are afraid of their own shadows on the wall, and not that much gumption about them as will help them to hold up their heads when they walk! I'm jiggered if they'll listen to the Curate or any of his friends if they don't listen to their own bodies teaching 'em, begging your pardon, my lady."

Mr. Treherne and his friends had taken up their position on the platform facing some twenty persons of the poorest classes, including half a dozen babies, the inevitable accompaniment to all meetings in the East End, although they could hardly be called a reciprocal audience. Mrs. Mott, in her handsome velvet cloak, and speaking in a refined and very charming voice, was reading aloud from a paper she held in her hand, and gesticulating slightly from time to time with her jewelled fingers. The lecture had been prepared, in the first instance, for an audience of country folk in Mrs. Mott's own neighbourhood, and had not been too carefully revised. Mrs. Mott entreated her hearers not to offer wine or spirits to the coachmen or footmen who came to the servants' hall for refreshment at their parties. She was absolutely in earnest, and perhaps

it would have been impossible for her to realise how little meaning her words conveyed to her hearers. A blood-and-thunder picture, with some allusions to the exact form of temptation which beset each of her hearers, might have appealed to them; as it was, her words passed over their heads. The women could have told you almost to a thread what she wore, but the few men in the hall sat, cap in hand, with a distant look on their faces, utterly unintelligent for the most part, and supremely uninterested, while the boys whispered to each other during the entire lecture.

Mr. Treherne, who had passed the whole of ~~this~~ day in a sort of apostolic fervour of hope, could think of nothing but the smallness of the audience, and kept his eyes restlessly turned to the door the whole time. He was thinking about the tea for three hundred people which he had provided downstairs. How was this handful of people to eat it all? How few they would look at the great, long tables! Some deep lines appeared on the Curate's forehead, as he thought of his early morning hopes about the success of the day.

Mrs. Mott and her friends were disappointed at the reception they had received, and an old lady in a satin mantle frankly stated the fact. To many people a journey to the East End is often tinged with a certain expectation of the dramatic or the ghoulish in what they may hear or see. But the meeting this afternoon had been simply dull, and the old lady said so. "This has been rather dis-

appointing, Mr. Treherne," she said severely, "I have heard so much about the East End of London, and I have always wanted to see it for myself, but I shall never believe the stories I hear of it again."

"Aren't we bad enough?" said the Curate, with unconscious sarcasm, and he nearly apologised for the respectability of his people. "You should see us on Saturday nights!" he said hopefully. "I don't think you would be disappointed then!"

"I'm afraid I can't come on Saturday nights," said the old lady pettishly; "but it seems to me that all these people are quite decently dressed, and well-behaved, and I'm sure they all look as if they had enough to eat!"

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "here are some more coming in. That's capital!" He hustled forward to the door and shook hands with a number of his parishioners who had come in time for the tea. To the ordinary mind it might have seemed scant courtesy on the part of the Curate's guests to evade his lecture and partake of his tea, and the old lady suggested this aspect of affairs to him.

"We must make every excuse for them," said the Curate earnestly. "I should certainly have liked to have seen a few more at the lecture, but I am more than pleased that they have at least come to tea!" His smile, banner-like and joyous, was hung out once more as the people trooped into the hall.

"Well, I must be going," said the old lady; "but I can't say much for your people's manners, Mr.

Treherne. I don't think you will improve them till you expect more of them."

Still Mr. Treherne's guests continued to arrive, until chairs began to run short, and even the benches from upstairs had to be brought down, and Mr. Treherne was obliged to say surreptitiously: "Mrs. Sims, would you mind going out and ordering some more buns?" His smile was almost drowned in a suspicious glint of tears of pure thankfulness as the people continued to come in. "It is the first time we have had anything like such a response," he exclaimed joyfully—his parishioners might have been subscribing to his pet charities instead of merely eating his buns, to judge by the look of thankfulness on Mr. Treherne's face—"It proves such sympathy with my work!" he exclaimed joyfully, "and shows, I do believe, that we have broken down the barriers of distrust with which, for years, we have been regarded. Come in," to a late arriving family. "Plenty of room? I should think so! We can't have too much of a good thing!" And so on, in a ripple of welcome and pleasure. The Curate liked giving out announcements in a loud voice. Now he smote sharply on the table several times with a spoon, and said "Silence!" in threatening accents, then, raising his voice, "will those who have finished their tea kindly move on upstairs to the upper hall, where we hope to have some music." A number of his guests rose and shuffled out of the room, with the fixed idea that all were expected to get through the narrow

doorway at precisely the same moment. The result was a good-natured scramble, with cries of "Mind the child!" "Look out for the baby's head!" Singing began in the room above, and the late guests went on with their repast. The Curate had breathing space for a moment and came to say a few pleasant words to Lady Gurney, who was still busily engaged in pouring steaming hot tea into large and heavy cups. Mrs. Sims had brought the buns across from the baker's herself on a large black tray, remarking that "this is the last bun in the shop, sir; you've cleared him out to-day, and no mistake!"

"How much were they?" inquired Mr. Treherne, with a view to settling up directly, and he took out the few shillings that were in his pocket, and handed them over to Mrs. Sims with a delighted smile.

"This is something like a social gathering!" he remarked. The failure of the temperance meeting had been entirely forgotten—failures have to be quickly forgotten by workers in the East End of London, and the bright side of everything has to be rigorously kept in view.

"You are being worked to death, I'm afraid, Lady Gurney," he said, realising how very busy his helpers were. Enid congratulated him on the success of his party, and assured him that she was not tired.

"You did not bring Mrs. Bretherton with you this time?" asked the Curate,

"No," said Enid, "she is at her place in York-shire at present. Her son has not been very well lately, and she has taken him away from Eton in the middle of the half."

"I am sorry to hear that," said the Curate, keeping an attentive ear for Lady Gurney, and the other alert for the noise upstairs. "It is nothing serious, I hope?"

"Nothing at all serious, I am glad to say," said Enid, "my nephew has been working too hard, we are afraid, and one night the curtain of his study caught fire, and it seems to have given him something of a shock."

"Oh, he will soon get over that!" said the Curate briskly. "I wish we could enroll Mrs. Bretherton amongst our lecturers to working men; she seems so full of intelligence, and she would, I am sure, attract large audiences to hear her. I wonder if you would say a good word for us to her, and see what she would do?"

"I will certainly give your message," said Enid, "but I do not think my sister-in-law means to leave Seagrave till her son returns to Eton after Easter, and not even then unless he is quite strong again."

The Curate clutched at straws and everything else that came within his reach. "Seagrave? That's on the Yorkshire coast, is it not? What a capital place it would be for our summer outing for the choirboys! Except that I suppose the journey there is a very expensive one; still, how much can be

: in the way of cheap rates and excursions! I
der now if she would allow us to pitch our
there? We camp out, you know, and the boys
y it enormously, and sea-bathing would, I
v, delight them."

r. Treherne was frankly a beggar. He was like
professional mendicant, who asks first for a
er, then for a piece of bread, and, failing that,
aps for a pair of old shoes. He had entirely
come any shyness or diffidence which he may
once felt upon the subject, though it is certain
had he himself been starving, he would have
ed to hold out a begging palm for so much as
lling.

r Philip, who had been to Houndsditch to buy
in coloured woods which can be obtained there
ome inlay work which he was doing, called to
t his wife home. His entrance was like a
h of something refreshing to the woman with
eavy tea-pot in her hand, and she sent him a
e, too fleeting to be surprised of ordinary eyes,
illed full of pleasure at his coming. Philip's
looked refined and beautiful amongst the coarse
ures of the men and women in the room. He
taken off his hat as he entered the hall (a
esly not always understood in Bethnal Green)
he stood bare-headed amongst the press in the
way, waiting for the crowd to pass upstairs.
he crossed the room to where his wife sat by
mplying table, asking, with the courtesy which
nguished him, whether she was ready to go

home yet; the carriage was waiting if she was really at liberty to leave. The Curate came forward and murmured his thanks, and hoped cordially that she might come again. "And you will remember our Jumble Sale, won't you?" he continued, following her across the room and shaking hands at the carriage door. He watched her drive away, the high-stepping horses clattering loudly in the narrow street, and the carriage lamps flashing in the darkness. Then he took a long breath of foggy air, and returned to the vitiated atmosphere of the Parish Room upstairs.

To Philip it had ever seemed that these drives in the dark in the carriage with his wife were among the rare and perfect moments when he enjoyed her society to the fullest extent. The darkness closed them in, the street lamps outside only here and there revealing the dear form beside him to his gaze. They were so near each other here in the carriage with the heavy fur rug across their knees, and no interruptions coming to disturb the intimate fleeting moments! The noise of the wheels only seemed to make their voices a little lower to each other, the swift passing of vehicles and the rush and hurry of the streets only left them more exquisitely alone, the rapid motion of the carriage lent a certain sort of exhilaration to the hour. Their talks on a homeward journey at night were often remembered by them as something almost sacred in their nearness, while hand clasped hand in the darkness, and heart spoke to heart. This evening Philip half grudg-

ingly unfolded the contents of a letter which he had received from his sister, containing news which, while she spoke of it lightly, as usual, seemed nevertheless to be causing her a good deal of annoyance. Several rickyards on the property had been fired, and it was too evidently the work of an incendiary. Watches had been set and farms patrolled without any success in the way either of preventing the conflagrations, or of arresting the perpetrator of them, and now Inez wrote to her brother regretting the occurrence, and saying that extra police had been called in to patrol the district. "I dislike it very much for Reggie," the letter ran; "I told you, of course, how upset he had been by the fire in his study at Eton, and I can see that these fires, which have been almost of nightly occurrence, are making him very nervous and excited. I should like to leave and come to London for a time, but the air here seemed to be doing him good, besides, he has a horror of leaving the place."

"What an unfortunate thing it is!" said Philip. "Reggie is sixteen now, and I know that that is the very time that Inez dreaded for any mental disturbance for him. You know how morbid she is upon the subject of hereditary taint, whereas, as a matter of fact, Reggie is one of the most healthyminded boys I know. I can hardly believe that his nerves can be so much upset either by the fire in his study at Eton, or by these mischievous destructions of the hay-ricks at Seagrave."

"Would you like to go there for a time?" Enid asked, "it might be a comfort to Inez to have you."

"If it were anyone else but Inez, I should certainly go," said Philip; "but I fear her dislike to anything like interference would make me an unwelcome guest; I hardly know what to do about it." He looked at her anxiously: "still, if you think you can leave home," he said, "I think perhaps it would be a good thing to run up to Seagrave for a day or two."

CHAPTER XV

BUT Reginald Bretherton was almost immediately ordered foreign travel in the care of a tutor as a cure for disordered nerves, and Inez, whom the doctors had recommended not to travel with her son, came up to London again.

"No, I was not the least lonely, thank you, nor dull at Seagrave," she said with her usual quick repudiation of any hint of sympathy. "But it is quite possible to miss companionship without being either dull or lonely, and I prefer to come to London, where a multitude of people and things keep me very well amused."

She collected round her her usual circle of friends —politicians, professors, and celebrated men and women of all classes. Since she had ceased to write, her old prejudice in favour of literary folk had returned fourfold. "When one is writing one's self," she explained, "one does not believe in them, but when one has ceased to scribble, well, they seem a very wonderful class of beings."

"You will write again, surely," her brother said to her, "the book of poems was too good, Inez, not to be followed by something else."

"I shall not write again, my dear Philip," replied his sister, "nor will I discuss what I have written.

That book of poems was a weakness of which I am heartily ashamed."

She gave her sumptuous dinner-parties as before, and received in the evenings while a Viennese band played in the conservatory, and she, in her queer, beautiful gowns, and with her clever, keen face, moved amongst her guests, hardly troubling to make conventional remarks to them or to act the part of conventional hostess, but insuring success by stamping her own personality on every entertainment she gave. She spoke without hesitation, or even a hint of deference, to some of the greatest of English statesmen and men of letters on their own subjects, and measured her wit with theirs, while other women hung upon their words. Probably she knew political secrets of European interest. If so, she was silent upon the subject, where others, easily flattered at receiving confidences, would at least have hinted at the possession of the information which they held. It is more than likely that Inez accurately gauged the importance of political secrets—the world was not really controlled by those who called themselves wire-pullers; there were more gigantic forces at work making the history of nations.

"At present this sort of thing rather amuses me," she was saying to her brother when the last guests had left, after what the journalists would probably call in to-morrow's issue "a brilliant gathering."

Philip had remained behind in order to have an

opportunity for a chat with his sister. Her cynical speeches and her defiance of fate had a grim bravery about them. Her very laugh showed that she had conquered. She was happy, he thought, even while Reggie was away from her. Inez was a woman who had determined that life should not break her!

He drew up one of her comfortable chairs to the bright fire in her morning room, and prepared to enjoy a chat. There was something bracing in this woman's very voice, and her Pagan cheerfulness was never forced, just as her smiles were never assumed in the hope of making other people happy. Inez Bretherton had enjoyed her evening party, and Philip congratulated her upon its success.

"Have you ever considered," she said in reply, "why it is so many people are bored? It is because of a certain vanity which forbids them to say that they have got tired of a thing. We make our past actions a sort of moral precedent to which we must always conform. There is an etiquette in morals, you know. What we like and what we mean to do, we generally justify to ourselves by labelling with some very fine names. Women, for the most part, call their favourite amusements duty. No woman ever really enjoys a thing unless she does it from a sense of duty; and a man varnishes even his meanest actions with rather a transparent coat of justice. Justice is a man's prerogative, duty is a woman's, and under one heading or the other both of them follow their own tastes."

"I like your little psychological studies, Inez,"

said Philip smiling; "I wonder when you find time for them! Well," he continued, "I suppose it is the innate Puritanism of our nation which, having decided that virtue and joy must be directly opposed to each other, endeavours with such infinite trouble to cloak innocent recreations in sober, if very thin, disguise."

"I was trying to imagine the other day," said Inez, "what it would be like to have a cathedral on Epsom Downs, and for the English public to worship in it as a matter of joyfulness and pure delight before the Derby was run."

"It sounds hopelessly blasphemous," said Philip, "not to say bad form."

"Oh, we put all our amusements under the immediate patronage of the Devil long ago!" exclaimed Inez.

"And so," laughed her brother, "we timidly accept them under some covering of virtue which does not in the least belong to them, and is an atrocious misfit."

"Virtue is rather enjoyable," said Inez, "in its own way. We recommend it to children who, we are quite sure, will never be clever."

Philip entered into his sister's mood with the old intimacy which had ever been such a bond between them. He enjoyed her heterodox speeches with a sort of heathen satisfaction, and he admired in her the absence of the Puritanical desire to correct and control another's thoughts.

"I have often thought," he said, "that the prim,

conventionally virtuous person is the most difficult in the world to understand, and certainly, if we are to believe Scripture, the most difficult in the world to save."

"I can never quite make out," said Inez, "whether people are trying to gain Heaven by being virtuous, or whether they are merely trying to be consistent. Philip, have you ever met a really consistent person?"

"Never, I am thankful to say!" he answered, smiling.

"I have!" cried Inez, "they come and call upon me! That is part of the consistency of their lives, just as it is another part of their consistency to drag about with them everywhere the corpses of past actions—I shall do so, I have always done so; I shall think so, I have always thought so—that is the burden of their speech. And that bores me so—that bores me so!" cried Inez, with only a half-humorous touch of tragedy in her voice.

"Consistent people should all be in nunneries and monasteries," said Philip. "A religious vow is an effort to fix belief at one given point from which advance and retreat are equally impossible, and a stupid immovability is dignified by the name of consistency, or orthodoxy, piety, or conviction!"

"All is vanity!" exclaimed Inez, "and most things are a bore!"

"You are never bored," he said.

"Because I amuse myself in order to be amused. If a salon or a dinner-party amuses me to-day, I

shall do my best to have them. If they do not amuse me to-morrow, I shall sit in my rooms and read—or I shall go abroad, or I shall go slumming, if it takes my fancy! I take sugar in my tea when it suits me, and leave it off when I feel inclined."

"I always feel glad," he said affectionately, "that you have at least the power to gratify your tastes."

The little note of pity in his voice was not lost upon Inez Bretherton, who swerved slightly from it like some restive horse that has been touched with a whip. She began to speak quickly and with a light touch of recklessness underneath her words. "Money forms one part of the power which we know ought to belong to us," she said; "and certainly, as the world stands at present, it also means a good deal of substantial happiness and exemption from many ills. Safety is not ensured for the most useful, but for the most wealthy amongst us. Oh, I am not talking twaddle about bloated capitalists and the like! Money is the essence of power and the symbol of it. The law of competition exists and rules this world—I don't profess to know anything about the other! And the prize-winners get prizes—that is all. Well, in commercial England we give money prizes—they are always more popular than bay leaves! But let us be honest enough to admit that the prizes are for the most part fairly won—by brains, by grit, by toil, by thrift—and then let us be equally honest and say that the prize-winners have the best of it! Liability to disease, underfeeding, overcrowding, are not these the heritage of the

men and women who are still doing the work—still running the race of the world? Who is more liable to accidents—the mechanic, the platelayer, the stoker (with his forty short years of flame and sweat), the fisherman, the miner, the factory hand, or people like ourselves?"

"Ah, but," said Philip quickly, "is the life that is free from danger always the happier life? Surely not. Why, we would all live in fireproof cases lined with cotton-wool if it were so! No, no, the life which accepts danger and even counts it as a stimulus has in itself the very essence of life."

"I like the acrobatic attempts people are always making to prove that well-being and comfort are utterly valueless!"

"And yet our whole idea of health and health-mindedness is based on discomfort," said Philip; "and we call the boy healthy who loves a cold dip in the sea, or who glories in standing bare-headed in the sun through a long cricket match. Depend upon it there is no such sure sign of health as a love of hard things."

"For those who do love them," rejoined Inez quickly, "let such things be abundantly given! But I claim that for lack of money thousands of people are dying miserably and living miserably, whose whole desire is to live happily. Our stoker and platelayer and fisherman disregard dangers and may find pleasures in the frozen North Sea, or the atmosphere of the stoke-hole; but when the boiler

bursts, or the fisherman's boat goes down, what then——”

Inez had gone beyond the limits of her brother's own mood. With a turn of feeling he exclaimed quickly, and with genuine enthusiasm, “At least they have lived and been strong! Every one who discounts the pleasures of work, even with its attendant difficulties and dangers, is leaving out one half of human life. Think how much more intensely these men have lived than the men and women whose lives are sheltered and protected.”

“They have also died,” said Inez dryly, “and they have returned to dust long ago, while we, with our much-scorned prudence and care, live on. Give me life, the longest and the most enjoyable that money can buy, or that skill and power and intelligence can give!”

“Life as an end in itself,” said Philip musingly. “I wonder if that is our ultimate desire, or may not we, who love life so much, be losing it all the time! I don't speak with pious intention, but I do believe that life can only be enjoyed by holding it lightly. Who really gets the best of life? The sportsman who takes his fences in the field or rides a steeplechase, or the man who sits in safety by the fire at home?”

“I enjoy my fire and my down pillows,” said Inez.

“That reminds me,” he returned pleasantly, “that it is much too late for discussion; I must not keep

you out of bed any longer! Your candles are turned down, and we must say good-night."

His sister's cynicism, which would never have attracted him in another woman, commended itself him in her. Inez accepted life as a tragedy, and even laughed at it; but to-night Philip found laughing difficult.

He went homeward through the misty London streets. How dim and solitary the place looked after the light and brightness and flowers of Mrs. Etherton's drawing-rooms! The streets looked sadder in their midnight emptiness than they appeared in the crowded hours of daylight. Their sadness conveyed a sense of physical cold, and their solitariness was charged with loneliness, and prescient feeling of loss. The chill melancholy it enshrouds the hours before dawn smote with kind of fear upon him. There was a churchyard sadness over sleeping London. A few belated cabs led by him, their lamps showing for a moment passenger inside, a gleam of white linen collar in a tall hat, then the outline of the cab disappears; in the heavy atmosphere, then solitude again. Most of the lights in the houses had been put out some hours; London looked deserted and dead two o'clock in the morning. Here and there, in one upper window, he saw a light burning, and he wondered if, within the chamber, some one was watching by a sick bed; or did some solitary sleeper's soul tell the hours as they rolled by, broadly awake with the wakefulness and vivid consciousness.

ness that come only in the small hours of the morning. Here was a house with many windows still lighted up—a late dinner, perhaps, or a bachelor card-party—further on were three upper windows with the lights still burning behind red blinds. What was going on within the walls of the house with its ghostly, silent exterior, and its fast closed doors? . . . Three red blinds, and a light behind them! That was all we really knew of the lives of the men we call brothers. . . . Thank God we all had a rag of red calico to place between us and the world! . . . Perhaps to-morrow he might hear casually that death had been to the house. He thought of his sister's words as they had sat late together over the fire in her drawing-room. Life, life, that was what we all wanted! The soul's most passionate protest was a protest against extinction—the sting of death lay there! *Perhaps we should cease to be.* What was there to show any reason for supposing that some essence of which the man—the man passing him in the street—the man of yesterday—the primitive man, the transition man-monkey—was composed, would survive beyond the disintegration of matter which we call death? We shirked the question every day, fearing what the answer to it might be—baffled by the sense of the unknowable. And yet everything depended upon the answer! In the morning the front doorsteps of the house in the quiet street would be washed as usual, and the milkman would clatter down the area steps, but the tragedy of the night lay behind the three red

blinds cut out of the darkness of those silent walls.

The night closed mistily about him; he took a short cut down a shabby street where a policeman tramped with his lantern. Two figures crouched on a doorstep in the chill of the night—a young man and a girl. Both were dressed in rags, but they seemed to be sleeping in the bitter cold. The policeman turned his light upon them and bade them move on, and the girl rose sleepily and pushed her hair from her eyes.

"Let's try the Embankment," she said.

Philip gave them some money to find shelter, and passed on.

Now a brougham with a high-stepping horse and flashing lamps rolled by him, within it a mother and her daughter returning from some rout or ball. The elder woman slept in her corner of the carriage, and the girl sat forward in her seat looking out of the window. She had flowers in her hair, and her lips were smiling. . . . The brougham lights flashed in the darkness and then died away, and the echoing sound of the horse's hoofs sounded distinctly, till they, too, were swallowed up in the misty night. Two men in fur-trimmed overcoats crossed the street in front of him, they were talking of someone whom they called the best girl that ever stepped. . . . A lost dog sniffed at his heels and followed him for a few minutes, with an almost human desire for companionship, and then, attracted by another step, ran down a side street in a busy search for his master,

Philip walked onwards up Whitehall, where not even a belated cab disturbed the stillness. A sickly moon showed herself for a moment through watery clouds, lighting up Trafalgar Square picturesquely. Its mean proportions and ugly lines were glorified in the moonlight; it was possible to forget how like an empty tank the place looked in the daytime.

He stood for a moment looking at the statues of the place in the moonlight—the grim, quiet houses all about him, and St. Martin's Church showing black against the sky. "Heroism is the last word for us all," he thought, looking at the simple figure of the Soldier of Faith in the middle of the square—at Nelson high upon his tall column, and then backwards towards King Charles the Martyr on his bronze horse.

Yet these received not the promise—the old Book itself said that! They died in hope, and what evidence was there to show that that hope had ever been fulfilled? They were dead. There were people who said that some intangible essence of them lived somewhere and in some state. But we know nothing; the thing might or might not be true. Only he, Philip, and such as he in whom the warm blood of life coursed at this moment, while the clocks all around him beat out their solemn strokes—only such as he could say confidently, "I live." All the rest were dead.

Some pigeons, disturbed by a causeless midnight alarm, fluttered suddenly about the statue in the square, sweeping the air strongly with a rushing

sound of wings, and, still not settling to rest, circled round Nelson's tall column in a flutter of distress, and then mounted up to the figure there against the sky in their rustling, strong flight.

And the figure of Nelson, still and remote, gazed away over sleeping London, undisturbed by them. The man had been great in his time, but the living pigeons mocked him now, perching on his head and fluttering about the bronze arm of the hero. Not all the powers of brain and mind, and all the courage of Nelson could move one finger of him to-day. The mercy of mankind left his bones to rest in peace; the pride of man had raised a tall column to his memory, but it was at their pleasure and at their will that even his bones rested where they did. Poor dead Nelson, he owed all the few feet of earth that were sacred to him to the clemency of man. Never could he now claim one drop of water from the seas which he had sailed so gallantly, never could he even ask for one spadeful of earth which he had so boldly won. The pigeons were stronger than Nelson now. Their nests might only be a handful of straw on the ledge of some city housetop, but they could fight for them against the intruder and hold them for their own. Fire and destruction might come, but their grey wings would carry them beyond and away from fire and destruction, and in the sunshine they could preen their wings and enjoy, and above the city's roar they could build their nests and care for their young. The pigeons lived, and Nelson was dead. . . .

Some lines of an almost-forgotten psalm came into Philip's head, looking up at the wheeling, fluttering pigeons: "The dead are forgotten, they lie in the pit, death gnaweth upon their bones, their beauty is consumed away in the grave. . . ." It was all quite true, and a merciful God, they said, had ordered it. Inez was right after all: we should make the best of this life which we snatch from a niggard giver, and clutch at it lest we, too, be soon bidden to lose our hold on it. A few short years of sentient personality, of consciousness in human life shadowed by some ills and losses—brightened by some gleams of happiness, that was all we knew of good. Then let us make the most of it! Let us enjoy it as best we can. Indulgently, as Inez enjoyed it; aesthetically, as it was his supreme pleasure to enjoy it; only let us be happy! That was the teaching at the back of all religion even. Work, prayer, renunciation itself, what was the end of each and all? To be happy, to live. We knew nothing better or higher than this. Only some people sought to postpone their enjoyment to a dim future time and to a place of some vague geographical determination, and others preferred to be happy here. Their methods might be different but their goal was the same. Why, therefore, should one man esteem himself righteous above another? The pigeons had ceased their flutterings now, and were at rest, and the tall, black column of the Nelson Monument reared itself still and solitary against the sky.

"Better is a living dog than a dead lion!"

.... Philip laughed aloud at the bare absurdity of the thought! Why, the very lives of these men made the question of mortality impossible. What matter whether Nelson and Gordon were still alive in some unknown place or not, if the faith and truth and justice and courage for which they lived had transcended and annihilated death? To continue living is not immortality; if it were, then the thousand-year-old tortoise in the sand might claim to be the most fortunate of created things. Surely life was made of something more endurable than flesh and blood. He discounted a material Paradise, and clung to the thought that the soul's indivisibility points to its immortality, because there is nothing there for death to divide or separate. Some sharp contrast between his sister's reckless scepticism and his wife's beautiful life of faith smote him sharply. For himself, he claimed reason of some sort as the basis of belief; but might not her faith perhaps be rooted in something which she herself scarcely understood, but which was immanently there all the same? Was there, after all, some divine element in life which he had missed? Was Enid saner in her faith than he?

His step quickened as he realised that he was going home to her. The desire for knowledge is insistent in most of us, whether we stifle it or not, and those who know will always be sought by those who know not. The conflicting things of life with their jarring and discord had in them, as surely as a chord played out of tune, an element of wrongness, and

even with the feeling of wrong is undoubtedly born the feeling that there is right somewhere. Instinct, a love of beauty, spiritual discernment, were they to be relied upon? How could men come to the supreme knowledge which would make all knowledge possible?

He was near home now, and he would ask Enid about it. To-night he felt nearer to her than he had ever done before, and their very spirits were close together now. At her feet he would learn the truth, and this very night he would ask her humbly, as a child, to teach him.

The cold glare of the electric lights lit up his own quarter of the town, and gave their chilly light to the big silent place as Philip reached his door and fitted his latch-key in the lock.

The studio fire was burning brightly, and he crossed the hall and entered the room before going upstairs. The chapel was next to it, but it was in darkness. He lifted the heavy iron ring of the bolt and went in. . . .

"My love! Enid! why are you here?"

She looked divinely tall in the uncertain light, for the place was but dimly lighted by the high-slung electric lights outside. She came to him holding out her dear slender arms in the dimness. "Philip, Philip, I am so glad you have come!" Her voice was choked with strong sobs which strangled her speech a little. "Philip, sit near me, don't leave me," she entreated.

"I will not leave you," he said tenderly; and he took her in his arms and held her close to him.

"How did you know where I was, Philip?"

They sat down on a carved oak bench together, still clinging to one another.

"I think I always know when you are near me," he said.

"Beloved, it has been such a terrible night! She was much worse after you left."

He pressed her close to him. "You should have sent for me."

"It was not dangerous," she said quickly. "Only these fainting fits have become more numerous, and it is so terrible to see her in one of them. If we watch her carefully and give her the proper restoratives at once there is no danger. But oh, they look so like death sometimes! You know how it is, Philip, when her face is so white and she hardly breathes, and one's own heart never seems to beat once till the crisis is past. And to-night, Philip, to-night——"

"Tell me just how it was with you," he said. The dim light and the hush of the room, with its altar loaded with flowers, its gilt cross just tipped with the gleam of the lamplight outside, and the outlines of the pictures of saints in heavy old gilt frames dimly discernible on the walls, had a penetrating quality almost as distinct as speech itself.

"Oh, I want to tell you about it," she said brokenly. "I prayed till I was so tired, and I wished that there were some greater voice than mine that,

by its crying, might move Him. My own soul seemed too small to plead with Him, and I longed for some compelling power to make Him do my will. I think my brain and my mind and my heart do nothing but pray now, Philip! Everything else that I do is only mechanical; all the consciousness that I have is prayer, and even that is only a cry!" She moved closer to him in the darkness and clung to him, her cold hands holding fast by his coat, like a terrified child that clings to its mother. "All day and all night, asleep or awake, I pray, not for her only, but for all who suffer," she said; "and to-night there came a great blank and a darkness, and I knew that no one heard me, and I thought—I thought that perhaps even Christ had died doubting, that even He had wondered if God cared. I prayed to Him, for we know really so little about God, the Maker of us all, the Maker perhaps of many millions of worlds; but we do know about Christ, and we do know that He listened to people and made them well, and loved them and suffered with them. So I prayed to Christ, and I cried to Him to save my child and to help us in our great need, and I thought it seemed to me then that she grew a little easier, a little better.

"Philip, don't think me utterly wicked, let me tell you everything! I was not thankful for that little ease that came to her. I cried out in my heart, and said, 'If the power of healing is really in His hands, surely to let us agonise and then to remove a little pain is not merciful, to mitigate torture is not to be

kind.' And I thought if only the world were ruled by someone kind, as we know kindness! If only it were ordered by some ordinary human being with a human heart! And in my extremity I found myself praying, 'Answer my prayer as a man would answer it if he could! Answer it abundantly, with something of human kindness and love!' And then I came down here, for I was so horrified with my own thoughts that the burden was more than I could bear. I knelt by the altar, and I took the gilt cross from off it, and I held it close to me, and I called out, 'Christ, art Thou dead? Does no one hear?' After that it was all darkness. I do not know what happened. . . . Philip, take my hand in your warm one. Keep me close to you; I cannot bear this! I cannot bear it! I think that the very stars have gone out, and that the world is in darkness."

"But we are strong men and women," he said, holding her to him, "and we mustn't be afraid of the darkness. My dear one, we know nothing, you and I, nor do all the people about us know anything. Those who talk most are those who know least. We don't know why we are here, or where we came from, nor where we are going to. We may be only a better sort of brute, who knows? Or we may be gods, the only true gods, the makers of art and of religion, and of the ethical laws. We may only be the whimsical creation of an omnipotent whim. But we have to live on and fear nothing. It is fear, you know, that has made these little gods whom

timid people worship, and whom strong ones blaspheme. We are all under the dominion of fear. What are our prayers? what is the litany of the Christian church but a suggestion of hands raised heavenwards, but raised to ward off a blow?"

"Fear comes with love," Enid said, clinging to him.

"We haven't gone far enough, few of us have gone far enough," he said humbly. "We all stop half-way, beset by little doubts and haunted by fears. I have no right to speak to you on matters of faith, God knows. I have always been on the side of the everlasting nay. I can't help you. I wish to God I could! But I know that I love you so well that there must be an element of something eternal in it—it must be the shadow of something better than itself."

"Ah, Philip!" she cried, "yours is a higher love than mine!"

He raised her hand, which was still clasped in his own warm one, to his lips.

"It is very dark," she whispered.

"I suppose we must go on living and doing as well as we can in the dark," he said, "but I know nothing."

"Perhaps there is nothing to know," she said.

"If you don't believe, there is not much left," said Philip.

A cart rolled by, and the door opened of a big house on the opposite side of the street; a traveller, starting early, endeavoured to get a cab by whistling

shrilly, breaking the intense hush that had fallen on the street outside. The world of London, with its insistent voice, obtruded itself barbarously on the silence-fraught hour.

Thank God, at least we all had a rag of calico behind which to hide these hours from the prying eyes of the world! But the noise of the newly-awakened street smote vulgarly, harshly upon something that was tense and remote in the stillness of the dim-lit chapel. The obtruding world was beginning to stir again, and Philip gently unclasped his wife's fingers that were locked in his own, and rose, and said, "You must go and rest, Enid. You are worn out with watching."

He led her from the chapel, and at the doorway she turned and looked regretfully at it. To her eyes, grown accustomed to the dim light, every object was distinctly visible. Here were the heavy, carved chairs with their sombre velvet cushions, there was the organ with its gleaming pipes. The pictures, with their gilded frames, hung on the walls, and the scent of white flowers, incense-like, and holy, came faintly to her from their place on the altar. There was the burnished cross which, only a few hours ago, she had clasped to her breast, flinging herself in a passion of tears and prayers on the steps of the sanctuary, and beseeching the dead Christ to listen to her. And here was her own chair, facing eastward towards the altar at which she had spent so many rapt and exquisite hours. She looked sadly at it; it seemed like one of those empty chairs

which stand by a hearth, empty for ever, bcc
the one who used to sit in it is dead. She had n
before left the chapel without kneeling in that i
to pray. Now she looked at the empty chair
the wistfulness of those who long for the dead
will never return.

CHAPTER XVI

was springtime at Seagrave. The days were warm and mild up here above the sea, but the lengthening spring afternoons hardly extended their light beyond six o'clock, and the nights were long and dark and chilly. And with nighttime there was always an eerie feeling of watchfulness and dread, mingled with excitement, to the people of little village up on the hill beyond the castle walls. Women kept their children at home in these days, from an innate sense of danger abroad, and the men preferred being in each other's company rather than walking alone. The publican of the Chequers had a roaring trade amongst those who came to sit ther round the blazing fires in the tap-room, to give their opinions as to the cause of the disastrous fires. The sense of something antipathetic to themselves was a novel one in the peaceful village of Seagrave. No one before, that they knew had ever wished them harm. Now, however, there was something malicious in the air; farmers and others were not known to have an enemy in the world had their property fired, hayricks and outhouses been destroyed, and restless hours were passed by the cottagers, who rose at intervals all night long and peered from beneath overhanging thatched roofs to

watch for the direful glare of flames. The stout-hearted youths of the place spent the hours of darkness going about in little companies, armed with sticks, hoping to find the incendiary, and catch him red-handed. Then came the time of full moon, and the village had rest from midnight scares for a while, but this period was followed by one of the worst conflagrations that had yet taken place. The moon was on the wane now, and showed but fitfully in a cloudy, wet spring sky, and no disturbances had taken place for some time. The police from Rorcliff had relaxed their vigilance a little, and Inspector More was enjoying a chat in the tap-room of the Chequers. The landlord, Mr. Snow, as be fitted his position as Speaker in the village parliament, rarely uttered his opinion on any current event, but merely kept order from behind the bar with its shining glasses, and gave his ear in turn to this speaker or to that, with something of the dignity of the Gentleman in the Chair.

"Well, Mr. Snow," said the Vicar's groom-gardener, who was enjoying his glass of ale and a pipe, "there have been many opinions about these 'ere fires, but I maintain and always will maintain it, that it's the work of Sociables."

The groom-gardener was under the impression, frequently expressed, that all Socialists came from Russia. "Who else but them sort of chaps would dream of wilfully destroying another man's property?" the groom-gardener said. He placed his elbow upon the wooden, beer-stained table of the tap-

room and leaned forward, gesticulating with one hand.

"I look at it this way," he said, "they've had their eye upon other men's property, trying to grab it from them from the very first. I've read their writings, and I know what they're thinking about, and what they are trying for. Why, they can't see a bit of park land bought honest from a man's own money, or inherited honest from his fathers who bought it, but they ain't raving and swearing and saying, 'divide, divide!' Now, what does division mean?" said the groom-gardener, laying his hand heavily upon the table. "It means a scram'le where everyone is pushing and shoving to get the biggest bit. Just the same as when I scatter corn to the fowls, they're all shoving and squeezing, not even picking up their food with much sense, but pecking each other's eyes out over a morsel, while very often a sneaking little chicken is ketchin' up more than his fair share."

"And just you wait till they have snatched what does not belong to them," said Mrs. Bretherton's bailiff; "there is no one to compare with them for sticking to what they have got. There is nothing to cure a man of being a Socialist except giving him a bit of property of his own."

The sexton, who sold groceries during the week, and sang in the choir on Sundays, said, following some train of thought of his own, that he thought there were lots more people who ought to be locked up than were locked up. "I suppose," he said, "that

I know the Scriptures as thoroughly as most men." (His ecclesiastical office was always uppermost in the sexton's mind, and he sold tea and sugar on sufferance.) "Don't we read every Sunday of our lives" (he was overstating the case, but the words had a ring suggestive of sermons in them, and his hearers were correspondingly impressed by them); "don't we hear every Sunday of our lives that the man who wants to steal and can't steal is just as much a thief as the man who does steal? Well, then, I say, he's got to be just as much punished, and a great deal more than the one who does steal, for at least one is successful in his trade, and the other isn't."

"It's very true," said Mr. Dawkins, the butler from Seagrave, a man of erudite learning, who only came to the Chequers on a public occasion like this, and who was in a most affable and condescending mood; "but I don't see how you are to judge a man's thoughts, unless you are to turn the X-rays on to them, and photograph their brains, which may come to pass some day."

"Wonderful!" said Mr. Snow. He felt flattered by the butler's presence amongst them.

"You can't tell what a man is like by looking at him," went on the butler in his cordially-magnificent manner, "why, we may be shaking hands every day with the man who is firing these ricks!"

The ominous suggestion was felt to be impressive by the group round the fire, and each man, with an uncomfortable feeling of suspicion, began to think

with apprehension of everyone with whom he had lately shaken hands.

The Vicar's groom-gardener was the first to recover from the awesome silence which had fallen for a moment on the tap-room. "It isn't anyone at Seagrave," he said firmly; "it's one of those Sociables from Russia, I've always said it, and I always shall say it."

"I've been at their meetings sometimes in London," said the butler, with his air of superiority as much as possible concealed under his affable manner, "and I must say I consider them a most loud and offensive set."

"It will just be one of them who's done these dirty tricks," said the groom-gardener, "looking over every man's garden-wall and envying him his very currant-bushes. Well, they is like pizen to me, them chaps, and I've always said so, and always will say so."

A light cart drove up to the door, and Mrs. Bretherton's head-gardener looked in, and, nodding to the group round the fire, said to the landlord, "Could you oblige me with a bit of candle, Mr. Snow? I've got a little trap here, taking my wife to see her father, but the lamps have gone out, and the missus can't bear the dark these nights. Good-evening to you, Inspector, I suppose you haven't made any arrests yet?"

Inspector More was not going to commit himself. "We have our eyes on two or three," he said darkly, and closed his mouth with a snap.

"It's not likely two or three have been at it," said the sexton, "two or three people couldn't be brought together to do anything so mean. It's one man's mind, and it's one man's work."

"There might be a gang," said the butler; "in London they nearly always work in gangs." The word gang had a horrible sound to simple country folk.

Mr. Snow returned to the room with a couple of carriage candles, and the gardener's wife was heard from the doorway, saying, "I wish you'd come, James, the pony seems so fidgetty." And the gardener, having ordered a pint of beer for the good of the house, hastily drank it and went out to the little cart which stood outside. The cheerful trot of the pony could be heard down the road, and Mr. More, remarking incidentally that the head-gardener was a good fellow, but off-hand, wished his friends good-night, and went on his rounds.

"That man," said the butler, "does not inspire me with any confidence. I wish we could have got down one of those smart London chaps to look into this thing. You may talk about Sherlock Holmes, but I have friends in the police who have found out as strange things as ever he did. You'd think sometimes that the very door-knockers seem to tell them things, and they'll get evidence enough to convict a man out of the hang of the window-curtains."

The sexton said mysteriously that he trusted no inspectors nor detectives. "It's the plain man," he

said, "without the regulation boots that does the real detective work; he takes his bit of evidence to the police, and the police is called a smart chap. I am watching pretty carefully, I can tell you," he said, "everyone who comes into my shop. I even watch the people in church, for you can't say but what these hypocrites may be singing praises with their mouths and doing murder with their hands."

Mr. Snow nodded gravely.

"Now, there's a gentle-spoken woman in black, lodging at the Crown. Can anyone tell me who she is, or what she is doing here?"

"A woman like that doesn't set fire to places," said the bailiff.

"Well," said the butler, "I must be wishing you good-evening and getting back to the Castle. I don't like anyone to do the locking up but myself now, and I go round to every door and window before I go to bed. The man who wants to set a light to a building, wants silver next, and I am very glad we left a quantity of ours in the Bank in London." He got into his smart blue overcoat, for the nights were still chilly, and started on his homeward road.

"I'm glad," said the bailiff, "that the mistress has got Mr. Dawkins, I'm sure; and I'm glad Master Reginald is at home again. Mrs. Bretherton knows no fear herself, and they do tell me that she and the young master have been at most of the fires; but a lady wants a man of some kind to look after her, and it's a terrible thing for her to be

without her husband, who is her rightful protector." He finished his beer, and took up his stick, and went out.

"Will you be shutting up soon, Snow?" said Mrs. Snow from the parlour door.

"All right, Mary, my dear. The wife," said the landlord, turning apologetically to the two or three men still left in the bar, "likes to have doors locked and chained up early these nights, and starts at every face at the window, poor thing!"

The Vicar's groom-gardener apologised for staying so long and keeping the good couple out of bed, and prepared to depart with the sexton.

"I'm jiggered!" said he, coming back from the doorway, "if there isn't a light in the sky over there! God help us, if it isn't another of these fires!"

The little party came quickly to the door of the inn, and two or three young men, running with all speed down the village street, gave the alarm as they ran. "Fire! fire!" they cried, and fled up the hill to where smoke and flame could be seen through the trees.

"It's the gardener's house," exclaimed Mrs. Snow, wringing her hands. "I know exactly where the smoke from their chimneys comes through the trees in the daytime, and it's just where those flames are rising now!"

"And James is off with his wife to Roncliff!" ejaculated the landlord. "Well, this beats everything! I believe there is someone watching us all!"

Mrs. Snow burst into hysterical tears, and hoped not, oh, she did hope not!

"Now, Mary, my dear," said the landlord kindly, "you've no cause to feel alarmed. You stay here and lock the door, and I'll go and see what is going on."

"Never!" said Mary; and it ended, of course, in the two leaving the inn and going together.

The gardener's house was a pretty, red-brick one, standing alone amidst bright flower-beds, just outside the great gardens at Seagrave. When the landlord and his wife reached the place there was a crowd of people assembled there. The flames had already got the house in their grip, and their red glare lit the upturned faces of the black crowd with a strange light. A party of young men had broken in the door and had entered the little house, at considerable peril to themselves, and were now carrying out its simple furniture—beds, chairs, and common oleograph pictures, a kitchen clock, and some trays of rough ware. The back of the house was already in a blaze, and no one could attempt to go near it; and a portion of the roof on that side had fallen in.

"Keep back!" shouted a party of men who had formed a line of buckets reaching to a pond, and were passing them rapidly from hand to hand, but who now surged backwards against the surrounding crowd as the roof fell with a crash.

"That's the most we can do till the fire-engines

come," said one man, wiping his smoke-blackened face with a handkerchief.

"Buckets of water aren't more good than cups o' tea now, and we must let the place blaze away."

The crowd, growing more dense every moment, and trampling down the neat garden of the house, watched, in a sort of fascinated quiet the destruction of the place. "This will be a pretty business for James when he comes home," murmured the inn-keeper's wife. "It cost him near a hundred pounds to furnish the place, and there never was a woman like his wife for setting store by her furniture."

There was a stir in the crowd, and Mrs. Bretherton, her head bare to the night, and a shawl thrown over her evening-dress of delicate satin, appeared upon the scene. Her thick brown hair was ruffled up from her forehead by the wind, showing the massive, clever lines of her brow, and her deep eyes were lit up by the glare of the flames. The crowd parted to right and left as she appeared, and her voice could be heard ringing out: "Reggie, Reggie, are you here? Has anyone seen my son? Reggie!" Her voice was raised and carried far. Then pausing for a moment to hear if any reply came, Mrs. Bretherton stood for a moment rigid and immovable. "Reggie, if you are here, answer!"

"Here he is, ma'am," said a voice from the darkness. "I am here, mother," said the boy. His face was twitching oddly, and his hands were shaking like one who has the palsy.

She held him tightly by the arm. "Come home," she said. "You mustn't be here, you can do no good. Come away, Reggie, and don't look at it."

But the boy, with all his trembling and fear, was immovable. "I must watch it," he said, "I must watch it!"

"You must not watch it!" said the deep voice, with a ring of command in it. "You will come home with me—I order it, Reggie!"

The boy was stretching out his hands to the burning house. "I should like to be in it," he said, and his voice was raised as he spoke.

"Shall I have to use force to take you home?" said his mother, and she suddenly put her hand across his eyes.

He dragged it away. "I should like to bathe in it," he said, trembling. "I should like to bathe in it. The flames are just like water—so smooth and liquid. O mother, let us go into the flames together!"

The power of her will was strong in Inez. She had exercised it all his life over her son, and she exercised it now. She did not drag him from the place, but her voice impelled obedience. He turned, and with shaking limbs followed her back to the house.

"Yes, come," Inez telegraphed the following day, in answer to her brother's letter. "You may be able to control him. I have telegraphed for Sir Mathew James."

The news was tragic enough, but when her brother and his wife arrived Inez Bretherton was calm and collected. Her voice was unshaken, there was no fluttering of the hands, no discomposure nor tears.

She went to the door of her house to meet her guests. "Yes, it has come," she said, in answer to their look of anxious questionings. "I always knew it would come."

She led them into the drawing-room and gave them tea. "Please eat something," she said to her sister-in-law in her heavy travelling cloak sitting beside her. Enid's face, with its pathetic lines about the eyes, had never, Mrs. Bretherton thought, looked more beautiful.

"Has Sir Mathew been here yet?" asked Philip.

"Yes," said his sister in a loud tone with a flat, wooden sound about it. "Yes, he has come and gone, and you want, of course, to know what he says."

"I should like to know," said Philip gravely, bending his head.

"It is the old thing," said Mrs. Bretherton; "and the fact that I have been prepared for it for many years makes the situation perhaps a little more difficult. I know what has happened, and I accept it, because what happens must be accepted." She gave a short laugh. "There is no choice possible, or else, of course, I should not accept it. I am not resigned," she went on, giving a quick, smiling glance

at her sister-in-law, "for I have not the remotest idea what resignation means."

Dinner was not a silent meal. Inez talked brilliantly the whole time. She seemed to have every one of the questions of the day at her finger-tips, and she discussed books and their authors, pictures and their painters, philosophies and science, with an extraordinary power and insight. Her talent seemed to consist in bringing out the whole meaning of a book, the intention of a picture, the root of a philosophy in a few telling sentences, terse, epigrammatic, synthetic. Philip, who knew his sister to be a clever woman, was struck by the variety and breadth of her knowledge; he entered eagerly into every thought which she presented, and contested keenly each point of difference between them. The dinner was a long one, and as elaborate and sumptuous as Mrs. Bretherton's dinners always were, but, during the whole of the time that courses were handed and plates were changed, there was hardly a lull in the quick interchange of thought and suggestion. Every word was well placed, chosen hap-hazard, but with unfailing success. Each simile appeared like a trump card. It was, indeed, as though Mrs. Bretherton were playing a game of chance with words, and was turning up court cards and trumps in succession. She spoke in a voice unconsciously raised, and pronounced each of her words with a sort of biting incision; but behind it all there was something never forgotten for a single

instant, and beaten backwards in every syllable of the brilliant glittering talk.

Reggie was in his room, watched closely by an attendant. There was no necessity for the present, at least, the brain specialist had said, that he should be put in confinement of any sort, but he would have to be watched, and watched carefully. His present attack could be attributed to some nervous excitement, caused, it was believed, by the constantly recurring fires in the neighbourhood.

Inez went quite frankly into the subject of her boy's health with her brother and his wife as they sat over their coffee-cups in the library after dinner. "He would be with us to-night," she said, "he generally is down at dinner, and you would not notice anything strange about him except his restlessness. But for the last two or three days he has been suffering from a very severe cold, caught on the night when the gardener's house took fire, and our local doctor is inclined to call it influenza. As soon as he is better we must, I suppose, move up to London, unless of course the horrid perpetrator of these crimes that have been taking place here lately can be found. We have an attendant for him, but to Reggie he is simply a valet that I have engaged for him. What he thinks about his own excited state I cannot tell you, but he is hardly for an instant still. At night he would like to continue walking incessantly, but we do our best to keep him indoors. Several times he has eluded us and gone out by himself. The search for him in the dark—not

knowing what may have happened—" she stopped abruptly, her drawn face looking suddenly uglier and old. "Generally we know we can find him at the old Castle. His love for the ruins has become, I fear, a part of his mania, and he wanders there for hours at a time."

"And these fires," said Philip, "has any light been thrown on the mystery? It seems such an extraordinary thing that in a small place like this, where everyone is known, suspicion should not be cast upon someone."

"Suspicion has been cast upon half a dozen different people," said Inez, "but there is never any real ground for arresting them. The fires take place at great intervals sometimes, and in most unexpected places. At first one imagined that there must be some grudge against the person whose property was fired, but who, for instance, could owe a grudge against our good old gardener? One of the most respected men in the place, who has never done any living thing any harm."

"I am very glad," said Philip, "that you mean to come back to London. When do you think Reggie will be able to travel so far?"

"Reggie hates the idea of leaving Seagrave," said Inez; "I have spoken to him once or twice about it, but it upsets him terribly, and he begs to remain here. It really is the reason that I wanted you to come—Reggie said that if you came to stay here he would do as I liked about returning to London when he is better."

The following day the boy came downstairs for a little while in the afternoon. His mother had said that there was but small difference to be observed in him, but to Philip and Enid the change seemed extraordinary, and they could not but marvel that to his mother it was not more apparent. Reggie was languid with illness, but his eyes burned feverishly, and he talked almost without cessation, and laughed immoderately at the merest trifle. He lay on the sofa by the library fire, chatting in a nervous, excited way to anyone who would listen to him. His valet was never very far off, and seemed to have a good effect upon him. There was a hope that he might be moved to London by the end of the week.

Meantime, no further cases of incendiarism had been reported; Inez had telegraphed for reinforcements of police, and almost the whole district for miles round was patrolled at night. The gardener's house was level with the ground, only here and there a piece of red-brick wall, smothered in smoke-blackened creepers, showed where the place had stood. The garden, with its beds of early spring flowers, was trampled down and muddy, and everywhere there were the marks of the feet of those who had crowded to see the fire. It was an ugly scene of desolation, and the old gardener and his wife were inconsolable for the loss of their home.

Mrs. Bretherton and her two guests walked to the place during a morning stroll. It was a chilly, damp morning, and the trees and bushes were heavy

with moisture. The earth was sodden underfoot, and great pools of water lay in the uneven surface of the trampled garden. The low stone wall and pretty iron gate leading to the house still remained standing; another opening at the back of the small kitchen-garden led into a wood and copse intersected with small paths. As the little party entered the front gate, the figure of a woman in black passed beyond the further gate, and disappeared into the wood.

"What a solitary figure!" said Enid; "and what a wet morning to choose for walking in the woods alone!"

"Oh, everyone comes to see the burned houses!" said Mrs. Bretherton lightly; "soon we shall be having brakes and char-à-bancs coming out from Roncliff to gloat over the scenes of the various disasters."

"Does Reggie mind seeing the ruins?" asked Philip; "or is it only on the nights when the fires are blazing that he seems so excited?"

"He does not even connect the ruins with the fires," said Mrs. Bretherton. "Possibly he may walk round here with his man, Hervey, in the course of the morning, and will regret the loss of the gardener's house as much as old James does himself. It is the actual fires that excite him so dreadfully; and then, he has taken to having hallucinations upon other matters, and his insomnia is getting worse."

"I wish we could get him away!" exclaimed Philip anxiously.

"He will be moved," said Inez, "as soon as it is found possible to do so without overstepping the line which the doctor was good enough to draw between nervous excitement and madness. If you had seen him this morning, when the idea of leaving Seagrave was suggested to him, you would know that it is not an easy business to manage!" She stooped by the garden borders and picked a handful of violets, wandered through the conservatories, talked intelligently about the plants and flowers, and then proposed that they should go homewards, as it was probably getting on for lunch time.

On their return to the house the valet reported that his charge had been unusually excited all the morning, and that he had thought it advisable on his own responsibility to send for the doctor again. The doctor prescribed absolute quiet, and no further mention of returning to London; he was waiting in the hall when Mrs. Bretherton came back to the house, and begged an interview with her in the library. The interview lasted for a considerable time, and the two who waited in the drawing-room to hear the result of it did so with anxious and sinking hearts. Still the moments passed and Mrs. Bretherton did not reappear, but her voice could be heard talking to the doctor. Then, after an interval of more than half an hour, the door opened, and they heard her hard, clear tones. "Good-bye; won't you stay to lunch? Please do, it is nearly two o'clock. You will find my brother and Lady Gur-

ney in the drawing-room ; won't you join them there while I despatch someone with this telegram?"

"Yes, I am very much afraid it is going to be a serious thing," the doctor was saying to the two who waited in the drawing-room. "Sir Mathew James, who attended his father, thinks the symptoms very much like his. There will be probably no more serious disturbance of the brain for the next few weeks ; at least, that is, if perfect quiet is maintained ; but if anything unduly excites him, we cannot say when the actual time will come for removing him."

Inez returned to the drawing-room, and they went in to luncheon. During the meal she was the only one who spoke much. "The first attack, or spell of insanity, will probably last two years," she said, "if it follows the usual course of the Bretherton family. And then there will come a normal period for some years, and during that time probably Reggie will marry a girl who knows nothing about the subject, and whose parents believe Seagrave and ten thousand a year will compensate for hereditary insanity, while she herself cares little or nothing about the thing. Later on there will be longer and more serious attacks, until he finds himself where Tom is. In old age there seems to come a normal time for them all."

The words, in their tone of indifference, seemed as though they must apply to some abstract case, or to one quite outside Mrs. Bretherton's range of

sympathy. She discussed the matter with less feeling than the doctor had done.

"Frankly," said Inez, "it does not present itself to me in the light of a difficulty; it is not like one of your dear gigantic theological problems. I believe in something that is clumsily called 'Natural law,' or, as I believe people prefer to call it, 'Invariable Sequence.' There can never be change without sufficient cause, and every cause has its corresponding effect; this is elementary knowledge."

"Oh, is there no one higher, no one stronger than law!" said Enid; she flung out her hands in a hopeless manner.

"Listen," said Mrs. Bretherton suddenly. "I have been through what you are going through now. I have been through torturing beliefs and still more torturing disbeliefs, and I have passed them both." She rose from her chair with one of her strong, impulsive movements, and stood in an attitude that had something almost of grandeur in the strength of it by the fireplace with its blazing logs. "I used to hear of Some One who said He loved me, and would listen, and who never listened; Some One who said He would interfere, and who never interfered. I waited long and patiently; I trusted (as a Christian might say), and believed, but the darkness closed in round me. There was no light anywhere, and through the accumulated resentment against the pain and injustice in the world, I sent up my bitter cry from the very bottom of the pit. I said, 'The Devil himself would be more kind.' "

She passed her hand rapidly across her eyes, as though to shut out some horrible vision. "The memory of that horrible pit will remain with me for ever—I hated God, for I knew Him to be unjust. I saw the tortures of the world, the things unspeakable that we cannot even name. I saw that the whole scheme of life was horrible, and I snapped my fingers at any argument from design. There is no evidence except of an unfriendly and malicious design; and if we want a lesson in hate and not love, why not seek it in human nature, where eyes are put out and ears stopped, and bones made weak before the final indignity of death is thrust upon us? I said to myself, 'Not a sparrow falls to the ground but He knows.' With my whole heart I cried out: 'I should prefer that He did not know; I should have a higher opinion of His tenderness were He not aware.' I said, 'I prefer not to have such a guardian,' and I stood up before Him and joyously blasphemed. I cried, 'I am better than Thou, for, although I am less strong, I am more kind.' Then from the intolerable place where I stood, I learned with tears of thankfulness that He did not exist. To some, unbelief is the darkest hour in their lives: to me it came with the settled conviction of revelation. There was no blind God partial to some of His children and wholly abominable to others, having power and boasting of it, but seldom protecting the weak and the suffering. This Tyrant was gone, and I wept with joy to think that there was no God; for I hated the one that had

been, and the relief was better than any religion I had known. No one who has found God ever rejoiced more than I did at losing Him. I have travelled far, Enid. I have seen the madness of the Fakir, the hideous idols of the Bhuddist. I have read of the Spanish Inquisition, and of the tortures inflicted by our own Church. These, I said, are the fruits of religion, its invariable, probably its inevitable, consequences. God, I said, has a thirst for human blood. But now He has no more. Light, not your light, not the Christian light—my light, dawned. I escaped from the God whom I hated in the only possible way by finding simply that He was not there. Oh, the blessedness of that thought!" Mrs. Bretherton went on, "the utterly blessed relief of finding God did not exist. It was like the dawn of a beautiful morning after a night of pain, or like a deep and quiet sea into which one sails after tossing for whole nights in the dark and storm. I bathed myself in the depths of those quiet waters. I stretched out my arms upon them, and floated away on their infinite calm. Personal spite was gone, and hate was gone, and my spirit had rest."

"And this helps you to bear sorrow?" asked Enid, her anxious eyes turned upon the woman by the fire.

"It helps me to bear it," said Inez, "for I know now that it is Natural Law. We cut our finger, the blood comes; we fall from the roof, probably we break our legs, at any rate we fall; the law of gravitation is not suspended either for believers or un-

believers. I marry a man tainted with hereditary insanity, and my son goes mad. It is Law, nothing but Law, which attaches a certain result to every single action which we commit. What evidence have we of anything behind that Law. . . . It is inexorable, but I fail to see that it is divine. There is no truce, but the fight is not between devils and angels, but between man and the lower creation whence he sprang. Philip would tell you that it is not beautiful, this negative creed of mine. He makes his gods out of abstract ideas of beauty and love and duty, and behind them he sees or guesses at something which I am unable to see. My point of view may be unfortunate, but at least I get no hideous shocks, no disappointments. I am not puzzled by the hopeless questionings which beset some people. When trouble comes, I do not even blame some unknown Being, nor do I resign myself to His will. I merely accept the conditions in which I find myself, as a result of a sufficient cause. My beliefs rule my conduct in a manner which I believe is sound and wholesome, now that I have learned that penalty awaits transgression of law. But I do not love anyone in some distant, vague place beyond the stars, nor do I believe He loves me. I am not thankful; I sing no praises; I utter no prayers. I merely accept conditions and ask for nothing."

"Philip says that all beauty is truth," pleaded Enid, "and that everything that is beautiful and right is true; but we women, I think, are not clever

at arguing on abstract questions, we love and suffer, and we say 'Why?'

"We say 'why?' until our hearts are brok said Inez; "and after that we do not feel mu

CHAPTER XVII

THE equinoctial gales came suddenly, after a long time of quiet spring weather—a time when early primroses began to show above last year's carpet of dead leaves, and celandines pushed up their golden flowers through the wet brown earth, and the purpling woods looked like some soft cloud in the hazy, damp, spring weather. The woodland paths showed tender shoots of green all along their borders, and the sea slept tranquilly under the battlements of Seagrave.

But now the gales had come, and all day and all night the wind boomed up from the sea, and howled in the wide chimneys of the house, and called like some unquiet spirit through doors and crannies. The trees on the edge of the growing woods lashed themselves together in the blast, and flung themselves impotently against their fellows, bending their heads and bowing before the buffeting strokes of the tempest. Down by the shore, fisherfolk, watching the great breakers rolling in, talked of wrecks out to seaward, and boats washed up on the shore in the dawn of a grey morning. And wives, whose men were out on the billows, had little care for their households within, but stood by the window with eyes seeing far away. The mocking wind gave

no notice of its coming, but rose in a night, hurled its blow first, and to those who listened spoke its word afterwards. Boats lying in peace at their moorings were tossed like mere bits of wreckage high up on to the shore, or were smashed into fragments against the sea wall. And the inhabitants of Roncliff, going out to the point where the waves break high against the rocks, were driven back along the road almost like the eddying dead leaves in the wood. The seagulls, bravely heading out to sea, were blown backwards on to the shore, and sought a shelter far inland beyond the moors.

"It's the suddenest gale I ever saw!" said an old fisherman at Roncliff; "but that's the way of the wind and the sea, they wear a smiling face one day and beat the life out of you the next."

The landlord of the Chequers put a screen up in the tap-room, for the wind, as soon as the latch of the outside door was lifted, blew a hurricane into the house, and hats and coats on the pegs inside the little hall were blown from their places. Mrs. Snow in the kitchen putting a weight—a heavy candlestick or a flat iron—on her light property, her pieces of work, scraps of paper, and such like, would call through to her husband in the bar, "Can't you keep the door shut, Snow? My things are blowing about as never was!" Mr. Snow put up the big wooden screen inside the doorway, and going into the kitchen he told Mrs. Snow that he had once heard a story of a cat that was blown up a chimney by the force of a gale.

"You hear some queer things in the bar, Snow," said Mrs. Snow; "and it takes a woman to unravel what is true from what is false—whether it is politics or whether it is cats, you swallow it all, and it's my belief you would say the moon was made of green cheese, if you was told it was!"

"I listen to all sides of a question," said the Speaker. Even a Speaker may know moments when his authority is not deemed absolute.

"This gale may last a week," said Mr. Snow; "it did last year, I know, and a pretty havoc it made of the place."

"Fire and storm!" said the sexton; "we live in ominous times."

Mr. Snow fastened the bolts of his windows with a firm hand, as though to keep out both fire and storm, and he drew his red curtains snugly, and said he felt thankful his house was situated in the village. "I have a great dislike to isolated situations," said Mr. Snow sociably, "and, suppose I was offered my choice, I am not sure that I would not rather be here than up at the Castle itself. It is a long drive through those woods," he said, "either by day or by night, to get to and from the place, and not a light to be seen from the windows unless it is the riding lights of the herring fleet once and a while when it anchors below the terraces."

"Have you heard how the young master is?" asked the sexton; "they do say he has been taken terrible queer lately."

The Vicar's groom-gardener shook his head.

"It's enough to excite a lad that's not very steady in his head, the things that have been going on here lately. I've heard of lynch law, and I'm not sure but what it would be the best thing for the scoundrel who's been upsetting us all so much."

"Yes, when we catch him!" said Mr. Snow forcibly; "we have not caught him yet!"

"Well, he has got a lot to answer for," said the sexton; "Mrs. Bretherton has had enough trouble, you'd think, without her only son going silly."

"There's lights burning all night now in the Castle," said Baldock, the bailiff. "I sometimes wonder if any of them get much rest these nights. It fairly grieves me when I look out before I go to bed to see so many of the windows lighted up, and think of them perhaps watching by the young master all through the night."

"It's a strange world," said the sexton, "but we have Bible authority for it that the next is going to be a better. It's a poorly-made world," he said, "a poorly-made world, and" (he added, for he was strictly orthodox as befitted his position) "there's Bible parties found that out long before I did."

"Don't it reely seem sometimes," said simple Mrs. Snow, "that the Almighty was practising on us, same as we make children practise their writing on slates? No doubt He'll rub out all the pot-hooks and hangers one of these days and write His message plain."

Ten o'clock struck, and the few visitors who had ventured out in the storm to the Chequers Inn went

home early, leaving the house at the same moment to avoid a fresh gust of wind sweeping through the place; Mr. Snow locked the door, and drew the doormat up against the chinks. "That's better," he said, "but what a whistling there is even through the keyhole! God help anyone, I say, who's out on a night like this. There's snow coming too, I believe, or hail—" for a few white flakes were blown scudding past the doorway of the inn.

"God help the poor fellows at sea, I say," said Mrs. Snow from within her comfortable kitchen. "I've reason to thank Heaven that my old father is past fishing now, for I never used to have a quiet night when he was out in his boat, with the waves breaking over him perhaps, poor fellow, and the sleet in his face."

"There'll be many a wet jacket to-night," said Mr. Snow, and he turned again with a feeling of great comfort to the kitchen fire.

One by one the lights in the village went out; there were no more patches of lamp-light thrown from the humble windows on to the village street. The place slept as it could, in the fury of the storm, and the wind boomed on in the inky darkness.

Only up at the Castle the lights were not put out all night. As the storm increased, Reggie's excitement increased with it. All the evening he had been restless and talkative, now when night had fallen and the wind rose higher and higher, his hardly-balanced mind lost all perspective of things. He raved of the storm, and of the crashing elements

outside, and had to be forcibly prevented from leaving the house. His thin figure, grown very slight during the last few months, and tall and fragile looking, shook with the violence of his feelings, and his hot hands fluttered nervously. "Let me out," he entreated, "let me out! If I stay in here and hear it booming, I shall go mad!"

Hail stung the window pane and rattled against the stones of the house, and Inez Bretherton, drawing up the blind, pointed out to the distracted boy how impossible it would be for him to venture forth in the cold and storm.

"Let me out, mother; let me out!" Reggie entreated.

Inez spoke cheerfully, and said that doubtless the night was stormy, but that they were very comfortable indoors, and proposed a game of draughts.

The boy hardly seemed to hear her; he laid his thin, nervous hand upon her arm, and whispered in a quick, hissing way, "Isn't it a grand storm? It is almost as beautiful as a fire. It leaps like flames, a storm leaps just like flames, but it is not so beautiful though it leaps just as high! Listen," he said, putting his finger to his lips, "it was quiet for a time and now it has leapt like a greyhound. Why do they say that the storm is not alive, mother? And that flames are not alive? How could they leap like that if they were not alive? Now it is shrieking, shrieking, high above the tearing sound of the trees, and it says, 'come out! come out!' Can't you

hear it? I know I ought to go out! The voices are telling me to come. Mother! Let me get out!"

His excitement increased as the night went on, and narcotics which had before soothed him failed altogether in their effect. Perhaps his quietest moments were when Enid sat beside him, her hand in his, and once when Philip read to him he fell into an uneasy, troubled sleep, which lasted nearly an hour.

He woke from his light dozing more restless than before. "If they would only let me go out and leap about with the storm!" he said, "I should be better. I want to leap and dance like the storm and the flames do. Pull up the blinds," he said fretfully, "do pull up the blinds, Aunt Enid, and let me see how everything tosses and leaps and dances."

Enid went to the window and drew up the blind. The room to which the boy had been removed, by his own request, was on the ground-floor, and the pelting rain could be heard beating on the gravel outside, and stinging the bushes that grew near the house. The lamplight from the room threw everything into greater darkness outside in the pelting rain and the stinging hail. Only on the window the drops gleamed brightly in the light shed from the interior of the room.

Enid put her hands up arched over her eyes, and looked out into the night.

Was it part of the terror of the storm and the darkness and this poor, raving boy, that she conjured up fancies and persuaded herself of forms

and faces which were not there? Or, as she leaned against the pane, did a tall, black figure really move away from it to be swallowed up in the darkness and the rain? She could not tell, nor could she speak of it, nor share her fears with anyone. Only the vision remained with her of a woman's figure clad in black, with a certain air of absolute loneliness about it. Then the thought that perhaps it was indeed some tangible human form drove her quickly, with her usual ungrudging pity, to try to find shelter and protection for this houseless wanderer. She made a pretext for leaving the room, and, wrapping herself in a heavy cloak that hung in the hall, she opened the door, which blew with violence against her, and with all her strength drew it close behind her. She bent her head to the gale and walked along the terrace to the side of the house where the woman had appeared, calling, "Is anyone there? Please speak, if there is anyone there."

But the wind tossed her voice far away over the woods and screamed upwards from the sea. The lashing trees, bending their heads to the gale, made a roar and a rustle which drowned altogether a human voice, and having made a circuit of the house, and called again and again, she told herself that it must have been some shadow or swaying bush that had deceived her; bending her head once more to meet the wind which smote full on the house from the sea, she left its more sheltered side and planted

her feet upon the gravel drive and battled her way up to the front doorsteps again.

In the sick-room the boy was still moaning and restless. His mother sat by him, talking cheerfully and calmly to him. After nights of broken rest she looked like some tragic muse; her face was as though the deep lines in it had been cut with a chisel. Only her voice was always under control; its light tones contrasted pitifully with the suffering in her face. She never left her son all night; and all night long the wind boomed up from the sea, and shrieked round the house with its human voice, and still, as it rose higher, the fever of her boy's brain rose with it. The doctor, who had been summoned from Roncliff, spent the night in the house, doing what he could to pacify him.

"We must apply for the certificate the first thing to-morrow," was his verdict spoken to Mrs. Bretherton at two o'clock in the morning after a worse paroxysm had shaken Reggie.

"The certificate of madness?" questioned Mrs. Bretherton.

"Yes," he said.

"You mean that it is not safe now that he should remain at home?" The doctor winced, and said firmly, "it would not any longer be safe."

Dawn came, the storm still raged, and the boy in his tower chamber raved on; Inez was downstairs in the library telephoning for the certificate of madness.

"As I think it would be a pity for me to go mad

too," she said to her brother at breakfast-time, "I shall go for a walk in the woods. Reggie is sleeping under a narcotic; I think he may sleep for several hours, and his man is watching him."

No one offered to follow her; everyone seemed to know that she must be alone.

Enid and Philip walked into Roncliff, as she had asked them to do, to have a prescription made up. In small matters like this Inez hardly troubled to exercise her self-control; she fidgetted if a servant went to the chemist, and showed a perfectly imaginary dread that some mistake would be made in the order given. The stronghold of her mind was well guarded, but there were some feeble outworks whose walls had fallen down during the last few days. "Do you mind taking it yourselves?" she had said, in the tones which had grown peremptory in their quick decision; "servants are such fools, and I don't want to go to Roncliff myself and be asked questions."

In the woods there was a deep calm. The thick growth of trees was undisturbed here in the heart of the great silent place—a shelter from the storm and tempest. Overhead the tree-tops swayed, but down in the depths of the woodland paths the shelter was complete. With rapid steps Inez walked down the drive and plunged into the wood. She hardly heeded where she went, but walked ever on and on, seeing nothing, feeling nothing, conscious only of one absorbing, dominant, ghastly thought. To-day they would take her boy from her. To na-

tures like hers, which know no relief in hope or in resignation, or in prayer, the tragedies of existence come with unrelieved intensity. "I blame no one, I rail at no one," she was saying proudly; "I utter no blasphemies, nor attribute my sufferings to the misrule of a Being whom I have been urged to love. Reggie has gone mad—it was hereditary taint, and I am to be left alone." Suddenly a vision of the boy's unusual beauty rose before her, his graceful figure, and his altogether courteous and charming manners, his pleasant, frank speech, and all the sweetness of his disposition.

"I am to be without him all day, and every day without him. I am to get up in the morning with no prospect of seeing him all through the day. I am not to hear his voice about the house, I am not to have him in my walks. He is to be put in a lunatic asylum, and I am to go on living!"

She walked more rapidly away from the Castle. The boy was sleeping now, and the doctor and his attendant were with him. Probably, they had told her, the sleep would last for some hours, for Reggie was exhausted after his night of restlessness. Her steps took her, without any volition of her own, to old Norman Seagrave below the hill. How grand and peaceful the place looked, here in the calm depth of the wood. The trees within the old walls were unshaken by the storm. The primroses bloomed on the ruined, turf-grown keep; some shy birds twittered as they hopped or fluttered in short flights from stone to stone of the scattered masonry.

The sky looked blue through the windows of the great banqueting hall. It was intensely cold and quite still in the old Castle. This was the place Reggie loved, and here, even when so much that was familiar to him had ceased to be of any consequence or any interest, here it was that he liked to wander. He knew and loved every stone of the place; his dream had been some day to excavate it thoroughly, perhaps to rear up some portions of the building which were falling, and to cut down the trees whose roots were tearing at the massive walls.

"At least I have denied him nothing," Inez thought. "There is not a single hour of happiness which I could have given him and have not given. There is not an hour of his society which I have not enjoyed. . . . I never felt before that I am no longer a young woman. I suppose I am not very old. Many people have serene and youthful faces at the age of forty, while my hair is turning grey, and my face, I suppose, is badly lined. It never occurred to me before that I was older than I ought to be."

A robin wafted down in its silent way from a holly-tree by the walls, hopping about at her feet, and looking at her with bright eyes. A seagull with gleaming wings, blown up to the shelter of the trees from the stormy shore, strutted about on the turf with the tameness of a pet pigeon, and some rooks, forming a building-society in the elm-trees, discussed sites and plans with their heavy caws. Inez rose from a stone where she had seated herself,

and looked out from the old Castle walls over the tree-tops to the sea and the cloudy, wind-swept sky beyond, with its rolling white clouds and scurrying, transparent, black ones across them. And as she looked, suddenly, above the trees, there rose a single tongue of fire.

Then she knew that the worst had come—she sped forth—already she was breathless, as though she had run far. Her heart beat wildly and something swam before her eyes, yet all the time she knew that her feet were firm on the solid earth, and that she was racing like one pursued, back to the Castle. She never knew how she ran, she saw nothing but the great tongue of flames above the trees. Now the depth of the woodland path hid it from her, and again, on some higher ground, she saw smoke in great volumes rising from the tower. With headlong speed she plunged into the wood again. Down below she saw some villagers running—little windblown specks on the white road—and she caught her breath and sped on again. The trees seemed to reel round her, they passed her quickly as she ran, her dress was gathered up in her hands, and she was running for more than her life. Now she could hear the cries of the villagers, although a turn in the road hid them from her. They were still almost half a mile from the house, and she was not much nearer. Never did she dream that her strength would fail her, and never did it seem to fail! Her labouring breath was strangled in her throat, and her heart was beating with the

noise of a steam pump. Physical pain did not exist for her in that breathless race, physical weakness was not to be thought of. She crossed a wooden bridge over one of the woodland streams in the place, and her feet hardly touched the planks before she was over it and on the other side, panting up the hill. From the top of it she saw the blazing house more clearly again. The flames had got complete hold of the tower—far away on the white road she could see a horseman racing to Roncliff for the fire-engines. Still she sped onwards. Now a twig caught her foot for a moment, and flung her against a tree, and again her breath almost failed her at a steep ascent. But Inez had to reach the Castle to save her son. Where was he? The blazing tower was in the eastern wing of the house. . . . He could hardly have got there! Nothing could happen to him. . . . With a great wave of joy and thankfulness she remembered, for the first time, the work of the incendiary which had been going on in the neighbourhood for some time. Then she almost gave way; her boy was safe! It was merely one of those cowardly acts which had been alarming the neighbourhood for so long. Her boy was safe in the west wing of the house, and the doctor would see to it that he was protected as much as possible from the excitement of this awful occurrence. The doctor and the valet would remove him to some distant place, some house on the estate, and they would close the blinds and the shutters and keep her darling from all knowledge of the fire. The

doctor was to be trusted, and so was the attendant.

Still her pace never slackened, and now the avenue was reached, and a great crowd could be seen upon the lawn, while the flames leaped grandly in the roar of the wind that surged upwards from the sea. There was a tumult of people all round the house, women shrieking and men shouting something which she did not understand. Then she came in full view of the place, and on the topmost turret, at the edge of the flames and the smoke, her son stood and waved his arms and shouted—a madman playing with fire. The crowd parted to right and to left of her. No one stopped her. Some ladders, too short by many feet, had been placed against the walls, some men had swarmed up them and had flung ropes to the raving boy above who leaped and danced in an ecstasy.

Then Inez cried out in a voice that seemed to have in it not only her own present need and anguish, but the needs and anguish of years, nay, of generations of men. "God!" she cried; "God, Someone, hear me! Save my boy, or let me die with him!"

She flung herself against the garden door of the tower and was met by a volume of smoke. A man dragged her back forcibly, saying, "The staircase is burned to a cinder, ma'am, it's madness to try to get up."

Inez struck him with all her force in the face. "Fool," she said, "have you been up the stairs?" and pushed onwards through the smoke.

"I have been half-way up," cried the man; "it's when you get to the second story you find they have fallen in." But Inez had disappeared up the turret staircase.

Half-way up there was a window, and the crowd, turned to stone, saw her appear at it, saw her take one flying leap towards a leaden projection below where Reggie stood, and land safely upon it. The men held their breath, and there were one or two screams from fainting women on the lawn below.

On hands and knees Inez crawled along the leaden edge and so on to the roof of the castle, behind the extreme pinnacle of the tower. The place must have been a mass of scorch and heat, but, if it was so, this woman showed no sign of feeling it. She was within a few yards of her boy now, and he stood still, paralysed for a moment, watching her.

"Ah!" The crowd was breathless now, they could see that she had seized his hand. They could see even from where they stood that she had somehow calmed herself, and was speaking gently to the boy.

The next moment the flames leaped up, as the storm leaps, like a greyhound, the tower fell in with a crash, and the two figures were not seen again.

Years afterwards the villagers of Seagrave used to tell the story of that stormy March morning. "The flames could never have touched her," they used to say, taking some measure of comfort to themselves where comfort was so scarce; "they were

found together at the foot of the staircase, both of them killed by the fall. They weren't charred nor nothing. The fire-engine men from Roncliff took them out, and except that Mrs. Bretherton's hands and feet were burned by the heat on the leads, it was evident that it was not the fire but the fall that had killed them. It may have been quite painless," the villagers said, "and they lay together at the bottom of the staircase, their hands still clasped in one another's, just as they would have liked to lie."

There were no further midnight scares of fire after the poor mad boy had been laid in his grave. The pale woman upon whom for a moment suspicion had seemed to fall, had left the village again as silently as she had come, and the place knew her no more. In the days that followed on these awful disturbances in this quiet country place, people began to wonder how it was that they had never guessed whose hand it was that had fired barns and houses. They began to remember how the young master had always been first at the fire, and how sometimes he had even seemed to wish to plunge into it. Someone remembered how on one occasion he had begged the bystanders not to send for the fire-engines from the neighbouring town, telling them to let the ricks go on burning. At the same time it had seemed a sort of boyish hopelessness, "don't send for the fire-engine," he had said, meaning, of course, that he thought it was useless to send for it. Someone, again, remembered the gardener's house, and how the young master often went

to have a chat with the old man of an evening, and had done so on the very day that the house was burned. He probably knew of James's expedition with his wife into Roncliff. His escape from his attendants seemed to have been almost miraculous. He had appeared to be sleeping soundly, and they had not left the room for more than two minutes, but on coming back the bed was empty, the patient was gone, and no one knew whither. Of course the supposition was that he had crept out of doors; his cry night and day had been to get out into the storm. It had never entered anyone's head to search the eastern tower for him, a place used almost entirely for the storage of old lumber, and hardly visited by any of the family from year's end to year's end. It was thought that probably he had for weeks past been collecting inflammable materials there; some large cans of paraffin oil were missing from the oil shed, and the tower was well ablaze while the distracted servants were searching the grounds and woods for their master.

The ruin of the tower was complete; only a small portion stood up, black and charred against the Castle's grey stone pile. The fire-engines had saved the rest of the building, but the walls leaned oddly where the tower had fallen, and some giant cracks showed themselves in the masonry. There was a great gap where the tower had once stood, and a pile of fallen stones lay at its base. The blackened inner wall remained, and stood up in appealing helplessness against the sky. A stranger passing

there might have paused, wondering at the great wound in the walls, and his eyes might have found something pathetic in the desolation of the ruined tower. There it stood, in a sort of sad wonderment at its own fate, as a man or woman may look with a helpless wonderment mingled with dismay at his or her own ruin. Only a smoke-blackened wall remained, clinging desperately to some stronger stonework upon which it leaned. And still in life, as in this fallen castle by the sea, there is ever a look of perplexity that mingles with regret about such a fall.

Well, the fires had done their worst, and they and the storms of March are things of the past now. The great gardens of Seagrave are planted and watered and kept in order as of old, and the wide, green lawns are cut and swept and tended; and the seagulls on stormy days are blown up from the shore and peck here the little seedlings of the earth. And the woods in spring are full of flowers, and Nature wakes again millions of bursting buds. But the woods are untrodden and the flowers bloom and die, and in the wind-blown churchyard, with its grey falling headstones and lichen-covered walls, a woman sleeps by her son, and perhaps, who knows, may have found an answer to the questions that perplexed her.

CHAPTER XVIII

It seems to us a strange thing, and one that is not always attributable to coincidence, that the thing which is present in our minds should be constantly under discussion even amongst those who never—or so we thought—interested themselves at all in our particular subjects. It points, perhaps, to the existence, so often disputed, of “waves” of thought passing over certain parts of the world at certain times, whose course can be traced almost as one can trace the course of a storm.

In the months that followed her sister-in-law's tragic death at Seagrave, Enid Gurney, living in complete retirement, had sat, as it were, outside the gates of the city, far removed, in thought at least, from the daily life of the world.

In the early days of disappointment and grief Enid had met the shock of them with ideal dignity of acceptance. But now the angel of death who, as he hovers quite near, is ever wont to lay his kindly hand upon the weariness of those who are left behind, had gone onwards with his sword and his tears and his great song of triumph, and his pitying touch. Now reason and justice had their questions to ask, and sorrow had her protest to make. Doubtless suffering is of the nature of those

things which increase in direct geometrical ratio; the memory of yesterday's pain is added to the pain of to-day; and whereas the first day of pain is bearable, the second is much less easy of endurance, and the third day is horrible. Later on, Time comes and says, "I will heal"; but Time is a narcotic, not a healer.

After a year of mourning Enid came back into the world, and found the men and women whom she met in it discussing volubly, and sometimes picturesquely, their own particular little heap of ashes outside the city wall, where they themselves had sat—not in loneliness, but chattering to their friends about their sensations. There was hardly an hour of spiritual darkness of which copy was not made, whether in unwholesomely distempered poems, in magazine articles, or in spuriously intellectual conversation. People discussed their souls' health, or its symptoms of disease, in much the same way that they discussed the aches and pains of influenza.

Everyone knew to a shade what their religious opinions and those of their neighbours were. The old scepticism which only a few were brave enough to cherish had died out, and an honest desire for rational inquiry had brought in its train the popin-jays of religion, who spoke with a quasi-profoundity on all subjects. Novels, even of a doubtful moral tendency, were filled with the name of God; there was a great deal of silly chatter about Him. Drawing-room songs, set to sickly music, named the Unnameable on a high note as a brilliant finale. Half-

penny newspapers discussed the foundations of belief, and doubt was held to be interesting, while reverence and reserve were less regarded.

It was an age of guessing—happy guessing, for the most part, with a tendency towards light-hearted optimism, touched with a frank materialism, which was often ingenuously termed “spirit.” This world was no longer a vale of tears; frankly, no one wanted particularly to quit it; the plaintive note of a bygone generation with its sincere, or insincere, longings for Paradise was drowned in happier music. Things went well with many people, and their apologetic feeling towards such a state of contentment was humorously labelled “the Greek spirit.” Men and women were returning to a happier view of things. The sun was high in the heavens, and the shadow of the Cross was no longer stretched across the land. Sin was very natural and not heinous; the need for atonement not being obvious, the word was translated “at-one-ment” without too close a comparison with the Greek text. The pity was that such cheerful materialism did not altogether suffice; but it was better than the aimless theology of the day with its peeps into the mysteries. Some must study clairvoyance, and others had messages from the trivial dead; this one was a Buddhist without altogether realising all that Buddhism involves, while that one saw auras and preached a gospel of colour. Subliminal self and over-man were words frequently heard. School-girls wanted to study Vedantism, and youth knew

the Bhagavat Gita as well as it knew its Bible ; Journals asked "Is Christianity a failure?"—wholly oblivious of the voice which is putting perhaps a simpler, if at the same time a more comprehensive, question, "Are you a failure?"

There were quack doctors and quack mediums ; and a morbid desire for self-realisation was contributing to the advantage of thought-readers and palmists and clairvoyants, who were quite willing to receive soul-revelations at so much per hour.

But louder far than the clamour of society unbeliefs and fashionable scepticisms, deep was sounding unto deep, and the noise of the waves and the billows was rising. A storm was raging in the world of spiritual intellectuality, and the waves lifted up their voice on high.

A poet had seen the storm coming and had indicated with all the power of his mind, and in his deep-singing, beautiful voice, a lighthouse above the waves ; but the world still hugged its interesting little doubts, and only the few understood.

The poet took his ground on dissatisfaction, and cried again and again to the people—"Your soul is greater than your work, your soul is greater than your happiness, your soul is greater than your conduct. You have never been satisfied because you know that there is something better, deeper, higher, than anything within yourself ; because you know that every aspiration of yours is a reaching out towards something which we only see dimly and a long way off ; because you know that behind con-

duct, behind pleasure, behind work, behind aspiration there is an absolute certainty, and it is that which we call by the name of God."

Aspiration is beyond reason; it transcends it altogether. It is not in the domain of science—why, indeed, should it be?—"Can we explain love by science?" Philosophy demanded; "can the part understand the whole? Is God within the measure of your mind, and therefore provable? Or are you within the measure of His Mind—and is His unprovableness His proof?"

There was a roar of voices all about the woman who had come back to the world, and a horrible sense of confusion. The carved chair in the little chapel was empty, and the doors of the place were shut; only a housemaid on her morning rounds went there to dust. In her passionate desire to alleviate bodily suffering Enid threw herself more fervently than ever into her work amongst the poor. She had no "message" for them now, but she could make their poor lives less painful. Her face was known in crowded hospital wards, and in humbler places—in the dens where men and women lived and died. Children in the infirmary knew her and watched for her coming. There was no living thing so humble that she did not try to take it within her care, if it was possible to give that care. In the hours when she was not with her husband and child she was amongst the poor. Philip, who loathed sordid surroundings, mean dwellings, and unpicturesque rags, helped her as he could; he could at

least insist upon rest for her, and the evenings that they spent together were the refreshment and peace of two lives that grazed too sharply against those things which repel, and hurt, and discourage.

Their child lived on her weakly existence; her toys and picture-books that they laid upon the quilt for her amusement tossed listlessly aside, and her eyes looking with a queer wonder in them at a difficult world. The world had always been difficult to this little creature in whom the act of living involved suffering; but the moaning and fretfulness of her babyhood were not so often heard now. It seemed as though a sort of patience, such as we are wont to associate with persons of maturer years, had been learned, and had brought a certain amount of solace to her. Her face was unchildlike and thin, and she spoke very little, but when her father or mother entered the room there was always a spontaneous cry of pleasure, and the small, thin arms would be outstretched. In the warm weather during the long summer days at Malincourt she was wheeled in her little invalid carriage out of doors; in winter time she was seldom beyond the nursery door, but lay, still and wondering and silent in her cot.

One evening Enid found Philip's eyes resting intently upon her, and as she met his look he came across the room and sat beside her, and said, "Enid, do you remember the old cathedral, with the afternoon sunlight, and the boys' voices singing in the

choir? And the nave with its shafts of misty light silting through the clerestory windows?"

"I remember it," she said.

"And the lilies on the altar that you used to place there; and the still, quiet tombs of the old Crusaders in the church, and the hush of the place and its beauty?"

"It all seems very long ago," she answered.

"Do you remember the day when I was carving up there in the roof? I looked down upon you and knew that I loved you utterly; and the next thing that I did was to shatter your golden angel that praised God with its harp up there amongst the carved fruit and flowers. The angel was utterly broken: I could never put it back again in its niche, and I had no other to put in its place. But some beauty had left the dim corner of the roof, and the angel's pedestal was horribly empty."

His voice was so full of tenderness that instinctively she took his hand and raised it to her lips.

He went on gravely: "I think I have always loved you," he said, "from the time I was born. The day I saw you in the cathedral was merely a recognition of that love, and I shall go on loving you now, and for ever, and long after I am dead. For that is my claim on eternity—the only claim indeed that I make.

"When we were married," he continued, "I never for a minute intended to disturb your old faith, or to shatter your golden angel. But it has fallen now, and left a big blank somewhere. I want to ask you

to put it back again. Even if it were perishable, it was good that you should love it, for it made something beautiful in your life and—mine is not an accommodating religion—I have put nothing in its place."

"Dear Philip," she protested in distress, and she held his hand with a closer pressure, "if the angel were only a thing of gilt and wood it was better that I should know that it was so; it would not have fallen and been broken if it had been anything else."

"I want," he went on, still persisting with what he had to say, "to undo all that I have ever done in the way of robbing you. I want to take you back to the cathedral again, and see you in your white dress with the golden-tongued lilies in your hand. Let us go back together to the quiet nave, and to the great carved stall where you used to sit, and let us forget that we ever asked vexed questions, and that we cried out for realities, or that we discovered that there was an awful injustice somewhere in the world."

"But worship," she murmured, "is for something more than wood and stone."

"I know you will wonder at what I am going to say to you," he said, "but I wish you would even open the little chapel again, and put flowers and a gold cross upon the altar there, and ask your priest to come up from Malincourt to play the organ and chant his prayers. Do you know," he pursued, "I do not pretend it is religion, but as a pure, æsthetic pleasure nothing ever seemed to be more beautiful

than to stand in my studio, carving perhaps the figure of some saint of long ago, and trying to embody in him some of the noble thoughts that may once have been his. The tools almost seemed to move of themselves as I traced the lines of his face, and all the time, beyond the curtain that led to your little chapel, I heard the murmur of prayer and the sound of the organ, and your voice above all the other voices singing the praises of Someone whom I have never known, but whom I called the woman's God of tenderness and love."

"They tell me," said Enid, and she was weeping now, "that the story of Christ is a beautiful one, and that even atheists will shed tears over the mythical tale of the mother and her child in the lowly stable and the shepherds singing outside in the dark; but it was too much the centre of my life once to love it now as an old Oriental tale."

"I think He lived," said Philip slowly, "and I think He taught the world a great deal that was worth knowing."

"As Socrates and Buddha and Krishna did?" said his wife. "Are we to say 'He taught us something, let us be thankful?'"

"That has always been my view of the matter," said Philip; "but my teaching has not made you happier?"

"But happiness," she said eagerly, "is not the test of religion's truth. Oh, I know so well that road along which one runs so eagerly sometimes!"

"Mine has always been a hard religion," said

Philip, "but so far as it went I was satisfied with it. I asked nothing unusual from it, and got nothing unusual. I think in a way it was reasonable, because I expected so little; but I do believe in Beauty, and in your faith I saw something much higher than I had attained to. Once I may even have longed to attain to it also. If it has failed you—if it has failed you—" he turned, as if half afraid that his words might have wounded, "well, we must just go back to the C Major of this life and try to sleep."

He was leaving home for a few days on a flying visit to Italy at the invitation of a Cardinal of the Roman Church, to see some carvings and pronounce an opinion upon them. Shortly after he left, the invalid child grew so ill that for two days her life hung on a thread. Enid hardly left the nursery during her child's illness. The faintings, so harrowing for watchers to witness, had returned again, and were of frequent recurrence, requiring immediate attention and care, and for two days and two nights her mother had not slept at all. On Sunday afternoon a change took place for the better, but Enid still kept her watch. "I know she would miss me, if she awoke and found me gone," she said, when urged to rest; "besides, Mrs. Smith is coming to see me, and I must speak to her, for she is leaving England shortly and wants to say good-bye to me."

The nurses went to church as usual, and Enid remained in the nursery. About three o'clock in the afternoon a servant came to the door and said that Mrs. Smith waited below. Enid directed that she

should be asked to sit down in a little room near at hand, but excused herself until four o'clock, if Mrs. Smith could wait so long. Mrs. Smith replied by the messenger that she would be glad to wait. "Please see that she has tea, and give Mrs. Smith some newspapers and books to read," she said, before the servant left, "and say I cannot leave my little girl just now, but I will come to see her when the nurse returns."

She resumed her place in the chair by the side of the cot, and presently her overwrought and tired mind completely forgot Mrs. Smith. Brain fatigue and anxiety were making her head ache almost unbearably. Vision, bodily and mental, was not quite clear; and there was a veil thrown across even the bright pictures of the room. The little cot itself looked shadowy and misty, and yet there was a nervous sense of alertness abroad, a wakefulness which she felt that even sleep could never again touch or dispel.

The child turned on her pillow and flung out tiny, white arms on her coverlet, moaning that she was thirsty, and Enid rose and gave her milk, and hushed her to sleep again. For how long would this go on? It was ordained that not by one hour must human pain be shortened. Everything was done to prolong it; even the poorest hospital patients were now disturbed for ozone and revivifying spoonfuls of brandy. The cup of suffering had not only to be drunk to the very last drop, but it had to be unnaturally filled up by merciful friends and at-

tendants. The weed in the garden, how soon one would cut it down! An ill-made vase upon the potter's wheel, how surely it was cast aside! These ill-contrived things seemed hardly thought of in the great sum of production in the world. Nature worked upon such a gigantic scale, and units were of so little count! The law of evolution itself, what implied it but millions of unfit things destroyed in their millions, utterly, ruthlessly, mercilessly—not vindictively, but simply as a matter of course, so that the fittest might remain.

She drew aside the lace curtain of the cot and looked down upon the sleeping child. "I suppose," she murmured, "if we loved her well enough we would let her go. But even love itself cannot demand such a sacrifice as that."

She wandered from the window and looked down from the nursery's great height far below into the quiet Sunday streets. Respectable folk were going to church, and holiday-makers were going to see their friends; and women in their best attire looked pleased with their spring finery and laces and flowers. Young men rolled by in cabs, or sprang up the steps of the big houses opposite to pay their rapid Sunday calls. Nurses and children, little toddling things or rosy babies in perambulators, passed up and down in the spring sunshine; and some motor-cars with their busy fussing, and the hoarse, deep toot of their alarums, sped by on their way into the country. It was a moving panorama of life on, perhaps, its most prosaic and trivial side, but it was

happy. Here, in this wide thoroughfare, with its tall houses on either side, there was no suggestion of poverty; beggars rarely came to the place, the poor folk in slums, not half a mile away, never ventured into this orderly seemly street, everyone looked contented and prosperous. The women were proudly conscious of their spring attire, the men were contented and busy. All the ugly side of London was expurgated from this edition of it. Any weird and lurid chapters had been, as it were, deleted altogether—the page of London spread out from the nursery windows was a clean and decorous page! Nothing sorrowful or pitiful ever seemed to dream of showing its face in the wide, stately street. Perhaps in these orderly, respected, easy lives difficulties were unknown and vexatious problems had never come to disturb their little souls. Well, let it be so! . . . An old Italian writer had once said, "Let all men *feel*, some more, some less, according as they have within them the need to imitate ME." Did sensibility to pain prove a higher nature? Did the clods of earth not suffer much? Why should an inheritance of keen sensitiveness prove the higher nature—that also was a question.

She turned to the interior of the room again, for the child had wakened with a cry. She soothed her, and then, as she appeared more composed, she took up her position by the side of the cot, patting the quilt with a gentle hand, and trying to soothe the little creature to sleep.

The rhythmic patting of her hand upon the sheet

was acting in a manner hypnotic to herself ; thought was suspended, bodily fatigue itself had ceased to be painful, but merely numb. "Not to feel, not to feel!" That was what we should all pray for, and if the loss of the imitation of the Divine was involved in it, still let us pray not to feel! And with that came again the thought of death, and she realised what the pious folk of old had meant by calling it a happy release. What a bondage, after all, was life! And yet we still held our dearest to it, and no one had sufficient love to open wide the prison gates and let the soul escape.

A certain rigidity in the child's attitude caused her to see that she had fallen into one of those curious fainting fits that were part of her illness ; the little delicate features relaxed for a moment, and as was always the case in these moments of unconsciousness, a peaceful placid look settled upon her. She looked already as though death, with its peace of body at least, had, with its kind, cold hand, put an end to the hot violence of life.

Enid still continued rhythmically patting the quilt. It was impossible to stop it now ; some spell would be broken, something would happen if she stopped. The dimness of long want of sleep was in her eyes ; reason had not so much lost its balance as its power. The brain slept, and a thought half sweet, half paralysing, dimly shrouded everything. "The pain is over, and she is going to sleep quite quietly, and there will be no more painful awakenings." The mother's love was strong enough at

last, and she was going to open the door of life with its jagged nails and iron bars and its pitiful, inept little lock, and let the prisoner go free. It was not painful, only very indistinct, and she must keep on patting the quilt lest she should wake the child.

A golden-coloured canary in a cage in the window burst into a rapture of song as a glint of sunshine touched its cage, and Enid started to her feet. "Oh, hush, you will wake her!" she cried out.

Her heart beat with great, loud strokes, beat into her brain and her throat, and the sunlight through the nursery windows seemed to go out, and a great horror of darkness filled the room. Overhead there seemed to be thunder as well as darkness, and out of the gloom the leaves of a great book of judgment were unrolled, and a hand pointed with unerring finger to four words written in fire, and the words were "thou shalt not kill." She knew that she was standing by the cot and that the child had ceased to breathe. She stretched out her arms as though to keep off the walls of the room, which were closing in upon her, and out of the great darkness and in the thunder of closing waters she sent a cry through the house, "Help, help! come to me someone!"

Almost before the cry had died away a woman swept into the room, hastily turned back the curtains of the cot and raised the child in her arms.

Enid came back to a confused, dim world in which nothing stood still or straight, and all went whirling round in a mad dance, and in the delirious

giddiness of it she clutched at something wildly in the dark, and found that it was the back of the sofa in the nursery. Someone was bending over her and giving her brandy and smelling-salts, and she heard a voice say, "leave her quite alone. I will watch by her. See that everyone leaves the room, and that the house is kept perfectly quiet."

Out of the dimness came the memory of surging waters, but only the memory. Where did the waters come from? And had that awful thunderstorm passed? There was a picture of Red Riding Hood on the nursery walls. What a quaint little picture! She had always liked the child's red cloak! And that was Dick Whittington with his hand raised to his ear, to say, "Hark!" to the sound of the bells of London—the picture had been in her own nursery at Malincourt. She would have liked to ask if the storm had passed, but found that she was too listless to say the words. . . .

Opposite her, on the other side of the fireplace, sat a woman in black, with a still, pale face and smoothly braided hair, and on her knee lay a child. The child's eyes were open, and the woman was feeding her with spoonfuls of milk.

Enid raised her two hands and pressed her forehead with them; "You are Mrs. Smith, are you not?" she said in a bewildered voice.

The woman rose and put the child in her mother's arms. "Feed her with this," she said, placing a tea-cup in her hand, and the little creature turned upon her mother a look of recognition. Enid fed her

mechanically, and put down the cup and laid her in her cot ; then she came and knelt by the woman and put both her hands in hers and said pitifully, "I do not understand anything."

"I will tell you about it," said Mrs. Smith ; "but first you must drink this, and then you must sit quite calmly here by the fire, where you can see your child and give her anything she wants."

Relief came in a very torrent and tempest of tears. Enid was exhausted by it, and clung to the woman whose arms were about her, sobbing forth, "I thought she would be happier, I thought it would be kinder to let her go ; but that isn't murder, is it ? It isn't murder to let a little child of six years old get away from pain ?"

The arms of the elder woman tightened round her. "How can it be murder," she said steadily, "seeing that the child is alive?"

"But I've thought for days and months of this," cried Enid, "and I haven't slept for so long ! And then, when everything got confused, that was all that I could remember, that I wanted my child to be happy. I do not know what happened, I do not know how long she lay there ! I find it so difficult to remember anything!"

"Do not try !" said Mrs. Smith.

She drew her chair close to Enid's and still kept her hands within her own.

"I came to say good-bye to you, this afternoon," she said, "for I am going abroad to found a home for my girls, where they will be away from the

temptations of London, and perhaps I shall not see you again."

"I wish you were not going."

"I once heard a story," said Mrs. Smith in the tone of one who tries to engage a child's attention, and to occupy it in a way that will lead it from thinking of some distress, "I once heard of a man who was cast on a desert island with a boatload of other people, some twenty in number, part of a ship's crew. And one morning as he wandered by the shore, half famished, he found a barrel of provisions washed up from the wreck. He hid it in a cave, and at nighttime he used to come and eat from it, planning out how long it would last him, and whether it would keep him alive till a ship came by that way. One by one his companions died, and he outlived them, until one day a sail was visible, and a ship came and took him off the island, and the barrel of provisions was still perhaps nine parts full; there would have been plenty for the whole of the ship's crew. When the man came back to England he went to live on a bit of very dangerous coast, where now there is a lighthouse and a life-boat, though then there was none at all. Whenever there was a shipwreck he was there. He was always the first to offer to man a boat. He was a very silent man, but he was always sent for when there was danger, or when deeds of daring were to be done, and he always came. At last one wild night, when a boat went to pieces on the rocks, he swam out towards the wreckage and was half beaten

to death by the waves. They laid him in some shelter by the shore, for he was dying, and before his breath was gone he said to the rough sailors near him, 'He must have forgiven me, for He has allowed me to save more than twenty lives. . . .' I am trying to save my twenty lives," said Mrs. Smith, "and that is why I must go with my girls."

Enid murmured some broken speech; her thoughts were difficult of utterance, she drew down Mrs. Smith's pale face towards her and kissed it.

"Sometimes we are allowed to bear our own sins," said Mrs. Smith, "and that is very merciful. Perhaps it is just then only that we understand what forgiveness means. Sin forgives itself, till Christ forgives it."

Suddenly Enid struck her hands together. "Are we altogether responsible for our sins? Did the potter not make the vessel, and should He not be punished?"

"He was punished," said Mrs. Smith.

"But surely, if He knew of the sorrow of the world His heart would break?"

"His heart did break."

There was a long pause, and the two women still sat with hands locked, and the child slept peacefully.

Then the voice began again. "You know how sometimes one loves to leave a little keepsake behind when one is going far away; but I have nothing to give you except a message, and you will think it a very unreasoning sort of message, which a

woman can only give and never can explain. You will, I fear," she went on gravely, "be ill after this, but that time of dimness will not be so bad as the time of vivid wakefulness which will follow. My message helps one to start afresh, I think, and gives one the courage to live. No one but a sinner quite knows the meaning of it, and he can never explain it. Good people don't understand it—although they are saying it every Sunday in their creeds."

"Is it Forgiveness?" said Enid.

"Will you remember it," said Mrs. Smith, "even if you don't understand for a long time? I am going to say good-bye to you now," she said, rising and putting on her shawl, "and you will never see me again, and I shall never see you. I shall not even see you through the window as I did that night when I stood outside in the storm and saw you at Seagrave. I hope I did not frighten you—I had to be near Inez when she was in trouble. But I shall ask you to kiss me as a daughter might, because we shall not see each other again."

"Are you Philip's mother?" said Enid.

"Yes," said Mrs. Smith.

She rose as she spoke, saying simply, "You will not make it harder for me by seeking to detain me, or even by asking where I go? I should only have to lose myself again, and I cannot save so many lives from the shipwrecks when there is any burden of concealment upon me. To-day I am going far away, or I could not have said good-bye to you, my daughter."

When Philip returned next morning he once more began the quest which he had essayed when he was a boy of eighteen; but his mother had come gone, and had given her message, and they never saw her again.

CHAPTER XIX

To Enid Gurney the illness which followed the overcharged days and nights which she had lately experienced came almost as a luxury. Her child was somewhat better; and an invalid's necessary exemption from cares and interruptions gave a feeling of repose to this time which she and Philip spent much together. In her weakness and her pathetic helplessness some shadow of an old peace fell upon her again with a healing touch. Physical weakness was, no doubt, part of its cause—Philip had once said that there was a conviction that comes with fatigue. And the soul in its emptiness, and the body in its weakness, seemed to protest that too many questions were now asked; and that more would have been heard and more understood in the deep silence of God's presence, listening for His voice, instead of hearing for ever the clamour of its own tongue. There were long, quiet days in the wide, upper room of the big house, when carriages and cabs rolled by noiselessly on the straw laid outside the door, and April, with its thousand voices, could be heard singing, even in London.

As the days passed and she grew stronger, Philip used to carry her down to the drawing-room and lay her on a sofa by the fire of logs, for the days

were still chilly, though springtime was in the air, and flowers had begun to bloom. People had often said that the drawing-room, with its sixteenth-century furniture, its dim tapestry and quaint old chairs, and the deep couches covered in green velvet—green with a grey bloom upon it, such as one might almost imagine a passing hand would rub away—was too dark and quiet a place. But now it was gay with flowers everywhere—early roses and lilies-of-the-valley, and lilac and a wealth of blossom such as London shows in April.

Here Hubert Malincourt would come, finding time in his busy life for long hours with her, and Philip would leave the studio for the dim drawing-room with its flowers and whispering fire of logs. Those were not intimate days: Enid seemed to fear returning health and life with its complications, almost as much as others dread the return of sickness; and to touch upon old troubles seemed like looking back upon a valley of shadows. Later, however, they used often to talk together, using no stress of argument, in those dim, peaceful days when the spring light faded early, and the evenings were fire-lit and scented with summer flowers. Sometimes only a few words were spoken, while at other times the talk lasted long; and again it was only of Malincourt that they spoke, and of the people at home, and the poor folk in the cathedral town.

When the summer weather came, and Enid was able to be moved, she returned to the country, and

to the fussing, kindly care of Mrs. Malincourt, who brought with her a wholesome air of refined commonplaces. Mrs. Malincourt accepted life comfortably, and at the age of sixty-five could still take a girlish pleasure in a new bonnet. Her vanity, and her harmless if voluble gossip had something pleasant and almost youthful about it, and her want of intellectuality was restful. She still loved to play the part of the gracious lady in the neighbourhood, and gathered old friends about her. To these she discoursed in platitudes suitable to her grey hairs and her orthodoxy, and she even admitted the Dean on most afternoons, to discuss roses or poetry with her, while fearing that his views on deeper subjects were not altogether sound.

The Dean was part of the quiet summer which followed. His silver hair and stooping figure were almost daily seen in the garden.

The Dean was not fond of discussions; "As soon as a thing is spoken it is untrue," he used to say, "because no whole truth can be uttered in words." He pottered about his beloved flowers, exchanging roots and cuttings with the head gardener at Malincourt, and enjoying magazine stories while sitting on the stone terrace beside Enid, in the shadow of the old house. Nothing disturbing came in those days. The Dean read his magazine stories aloud, and enjoyed novels and the very lightest forms of literature. Philip had some carving on hand, and Hubert came and went as heretofore. Over the summer there brooded a hazy mist of peace. And

so the days came and went, and with restored health and talks of plans for the winter, and days spent in London, whither the crippled child would have to go before the damp season came, there arose the sense, so bracing to the strong and vigorous, so burdensome to the weak, that work must begin again and the summer dream was over. But first came an interlude; there is such a moment in most lives when the Lord has been taken away and the Spirit has not yet come.

Hubert and Philip had been enjoying an idle Sunday afternoon on the sun-warmed terrace with its yellowing stones, while the deerhound slumbered and the pigeons crooned as of old.

"We have been appallingly lazy," said Philip to his wife when she joined them at five o'clock tea-time, "and now it is really becoming a moral duty to go for a walk."

"Where is the Dean," said Hubert, "he is generally here on Sundays, is he not?"

"The Dean preaches at the Cathedral this evening," answered Philip. "He is becoming very fragile, and has to rest when there is any exertion of that sort before him."

"I wish I had known the Dean was going to preach," Enid said. But afterwards she felt glad that he had never told her, and could not even have known that she was in church.

"It will be far too much for him," said Philip anxiously; "they tell me he is going to preach about

this terrible shipping disaster. For a man of deep feeling that will be a difficult task."

It had been a year of disasters both at sea and on land, and recently the world had been stirred to its depths by the sorrow of two nations mourning for the loss of some hundreds of lives.

"It had been a terrible year." Some said, "These are signs," and looked up to Heaven; and others said, "God has forgotten," and looked down into hell.

"Will he be able to preach? Can he stand it?" Enid said, knowing how much more deeply the Dean would be affected by national disasters than the provincial congregations who had flocked to hear what he would say about them.

She and many others remembered that this sermon was the last that the Dean ever preached.

"I should like to go and hear him," Enid said, and she turned towards her husband one of those fleeting intimate looks more tender than a caress, and said to him, "I am really strong enough for it."

"If you wish it," he said, "the thing is done. I will order the carriage for you, and Hubert and I will get our exercise by taking the river walk and meeting you at the Cathedral door."

The brooding quiet of a Sunday evening in the summer-time is almost a palpable thing. We cannot believe that the air is ever so still and soft, or so hushed and touched with devotion on a common day. Sunday has been kept holy for so long that Nature itself, we think, has responded to the exhor-

tation to do no manner of work. There is a breath of aspiration as well as of mystery over everything, and the hush of thousands of factories, the repose of millions of working men and women, have produced in Sunday a tangible quiet which some may resent, but of which surely all are conscious.

Scarcely a leaf stirred in the wood as Hubert and Philip walked by the short cut to the river, but here and there a touch of autumn was showing itself and, like decaying life, a few yellow leaves were gliding softly down from the trees to lie and be forgotten except by the mother who gave them birth. Out on the farther road, where Enid's carriage travelled, a decorous look prevailed over the two little villages through which she passed. Aged folks were out of doors enjoying the September sunshine, and children in Sabbath garments walked demurely holding their parents' hands. The forge was closed, and the village shops had their shutters up. But here and there in a cottage garden a man or a woman was looking admiringly at simple shows of autumn flowers and plants. Wayfaring men, though fools, did not err by making long journeys to-day, but in every little hamlet home and rest were the predominant notes. Here and there, through an open doorway could be seen a family at tea, or a woman stooping over the fire preparing a frugal supper.

The Cathedral town itself, as she approached it, had hardly the sound of a wheel in it. Men and girls in the bravery of summer attire had walked a

mile or two out of the town and could be seen in couples carrying flowers and leaves which they had picked, or plucking brambles from the hedges. The bell was ringing for the evening service, and large numbers of the townspeople were walking in leisurely fashion towards the door. The Dean was an old friend of most of them, and to hear him preach was a privilege too rare nowadays.

On paper and in journals many people differed from his views, but in Malinchester criticism had become merged in a very real and personal devotion towards the old man with his stooping figure and pale, refined face.

Hubert and Philip were already standing at the outer gate when Enid drove up, and they halted a moment, for the hour was still early, to enjoy a little more of the sunshine before entering.

Inside the building the lights were very low within the choir, while outside in the nave the place was still flooded with sunshine which streamed through the open doors and the coloured glass of the windows, and lay in pools of soft colour upon the warm stones of the pavement. The verger showed them into the old, accustomed seats, and whispered fussily that the Dean was going to preach. Philip, with the ignorance of a man who has been brought up more or less outside the pale of the church, asked, when he saw the crowd about the doors, if the occasion was a special Festival, to which the man in the flowing robe of black replied, "No, but it is believed that the Dean will make some

special reference to the wreck of last Sunday. A terrible disaster, Sir Philip," said the verger, "and several of our townspeople have suffered bereavement by it."

"Yes, a terrible thing," said Sir Philip, "a most terrible thing."

The Cathedral was always a memory-fraught place for him, and it seemed to him sometimes that, as some men will hang their best thoughts round the recollection of their own home, so for him this dim church, with its stately aisles, its springing arches and wide span of roof was the place from which dated the greatest things in his life. He bent his head on his hands and a flood of thought came unsummoned to him, filling his mind with a bursting sense of recollection.

His wife had bowed her head also. What did the place and the service mean for her? he wondered. What was the Cathedral and all that it stood for to mean to them both? He was a man in whom honesty of thought was an inherent thing, and he never deluded himself with the idea that one ages into piety as one ages into grey hairs. Definite conclusions, he knew, had to be come to, and that before we had grown weary of them or become indifferent to them. He wondered, half wistfully, what the two people whom he loved so much, and who kneeled beside him, were now thinking of. Hubert was preaching his crusade, and although he never spoke of it, he knew that in that crusade the standard was flying high with no dust upon it. For Enid

he began by hoping with simple, human kindness that nothing more than was disturbing might come to her, and that this long-foregone prayertime in the Cathedral might be some sort of consolation to her. Before he raised his head he found himself praying, not for any definite good for her, but simply that she, who was so exquisitely dear to him, might be happy.

His attention wandered after the service had begun. The choir's well-trained voices and the rhythmic intoning of the prayers, the simple hymns with their tuneful cadences and their quaint, old-world phraseology, so full of piety, so sentimental sometimes, lulled him with a soft touch, and sent his thoughts far away, but all pleasantly, rich with ideas and filled with beauty. Now he seemed to see a saint's face grow under his hand, and again some trophies of fruit and blossom were garlanded on panels of his imagination.

Once he thought, half smiling, "I believe I'll try and do a herald angel for that niche up there," but it was only the artist's dream warmed into life by the sense of nearness to the woman to whom, first of all, his best work was consecrated.

"Sun of my soul" died away on the twilight, and with it the sun sank to rest. The Cathedral was grey now as a dove's wing, and there was a sense of mystery abroad. Out of consideration for the Dean's failing eyes the lights were not turned up; he himself looked almost a ghostly figure, when in his white robes he followed the ushering verger,

and left his stall in the choir and mounted the pulpit steps. It was his custom to preach without manuscript or notes, and he had nothing in his hands as he mounted, holding carefully by the rail of the steps. Not one of the congregation had left the church before he began his sermon. The singing of the old hymn had lulled them, too, into a pleasant sort of piety which made rest holy. Their easy attitudes showed not so much indifference to the sanctity of the place where they worshipped as a welcome feeling of ease after the labours of the week. The singing of the evening hymn had produced in them a feeling apart from the common life of the world, even if it were only the memory of the time when they had first loved, or when their first child was born.

The Dean gave out his text and began his sermon very quietly. His voice had little of oratory in it at first, and his opening words were spoken almost as though he were speaking to himself.

"It seems to some that God made a great many mistakes when He made the world, and that His Son tried to rectify a few of them. Most people are afraid to say this in plain terms, and are afraid, even if they thought it, to charge their Maker with cruelty and wantonness, so they murmur flattering words and sing hymns, probably with the idea of propitiating Him, and they call this faith. I think we have to get nearer the subject than this and to consider it with greater candour, because we are seeing every day the innocent suffer, and even, I think

we may say, the guilty punished out of all proportion to their sins, and still we say 'He is good.' That is because we are very lazy, for one thing, and we are in fear, for another. But there are other and sterner natures who know no fear and who are not afraid to ask questions, and from them there is a terrible challenge going up day by day to the Throne of the Most High. Some of it is tragic in its weakness, and some of it is pitiful in its strength. 'Make me happy,' cry the weak, 'and I will believe that Thou art good.' 'Show me that Thou art good,' cry the strong, 'and I will be happy.' "

There was silence in the Cathedral for a little while, and in the peaceful dimness of the church the congregation settled itself to listen comfortably. In this quiet cathedral town they were far away from wars, and strife, and ruined cities, and the astonishing tragedy of suffering except that which disease brings was not greatly felt amongst them. But a national calamity had happened, and in the still of the dark blue Arctic night eight hundred men and women had perished while a band of musicians played their march into Valhalla with something of the pomp of the heroes of old. The prosperous English congregation who listened to the Dean had been startled by it even where they had not had sufficient imagination to realise the extent of the calamity. There were few of them who had not asked some puzzled questions which had not been answered, and there were not many who could not look back to some shrouded day of which they

never spoke, when loss came and faith failed, and grim and stark the soul's question harshly demanded an answer.

They were waiting to hear more from the Dean of some reconciling thought which would make clear God's Providence even in the face of disaster. But he was an old man, and had to work in his own way, and his voice now was full of nothing but what seemed like a gentle speculative mode of thought.

"I often wonder," he said, "what it would mean if all suffering, or the possibility of suffering, were taken out of the world. There would be no brave men nor tender women; no honourable scars, probably no hardihood. There would be no martyrs with their serene and beautiful faces, and there would be no music. We know what we mean by music, and without high and low there could be none of it. Yet we are fain to say that we cannot accept analogy as an explanation of a difficulty so insistent as the existence of pain in the world. Suffering is due to sin, we say, and therefore, if suffering is good, sin is good also. It is an old argument, and rather a puzzling one. Christians make it more puzzling by accepting too many answers to it. The question of what the founder of our religion thought about pain is an important one with us all. For myself, I not only do not doubt that He wrought cures in Palestine 1900 years ago, but I believe that there are men and women in the world now who are curing and overcoming pain by the power of faith and in the name of Christ, and I should be afraid to say

that either they or the physician are not doing God's work.

"We know that there are those who deny altogether the existence of evil, and who, in some cases, no doubt, can prove at least that their own lives are not affected by it. We know their point of view, and we also know how, in physiology, many years ago before many well-known modern sects had established themselves, it was discovered that the seat of all bodily suffering is the brain. Our whole system of anaesthetics is based upon this knowledge, and we see in it the foundation of many beliefs. And again there is the other point of view which, finding that pain and disease are for the most part preventible, laughs at those who, living under insanitary conditions, trace the Hand of God in the fever which sweeps away its victims with an unsparing hand. Let it be admitted at once that this is a reasonable aspect of the case, and let us thank God for antiseptics and clean dwellings, and for such men as Lister and Jenner, and for our wider knowledge of the laws of health.

"But God is a spirit, not a sanitary inspector.

"I once heard," he went on, "of an old workman who entered a picture shop to do some trifling piece of carpenter's work, and he looked long and with so much interest at a picture there that the shopman stopped and told him what it was. 'It is a famous painting,' he said, 'of the head of Christ.'

"'It is not a bit like Him,' said the old workman.

"And when, in some astonishment, they asked

him how he knew this, the man replied, 'If you had known Him as long as I have, you would know quite well that it is not Him.'

"We are always painting pictures of God," said the Dean, "and one says that He is just, and another says that He is merciful, and another says that He loves us—I speak, of course, of those who paint beautiful pictures of Him. But we do not recognise the picture, and so we end in wranglings or discussions, in unfaith or in estrangement, because a lie always estranges more than anything else. Yet, it is on God's account that such lies are generally spoken. We are all very clever. I do not say that in any ironic sense. We are far better educated than we used to be, we are far more enlightened scientifically, we have far more means of knowledge than our forefathers had. The nursery days of the world are over, and it is not too early for us to begin to ask questions: it is not an act of faith not to think, only it sometimes seems to me that when we insist on understanding God we forget that we are within His ken, not He within ours. Man's supremest act of faith is to know that he is not God. If we could understand Him we should be greater than He.

"We have our ideas of justice and we say that He is just; we have our ideas of love, and we say that He loves us. But I think the faithful soul puts it another way, and says not that He loves, but that He is love; not that He is true, but that He is truth; not that He is merciful, but that He is mercy; and

so, when they find love, and truth, and justice, and mercy in the world, they know and feel certain that that is part of God, or, as we sometimes hear it called, evidence of the Divine. It is said that there must be first the instrument, then the music, as if, forsooth, music depended upon our little reeds and pipes and would cease to exist if reeds and pipes were no more. For myself, I believe that music, justice, mercy, and truth would exist whether this world existed or not. They are much more everlasting than the world.

"Sometimes I think we talk too much, and become dulled by reason of the noise we ourselves are making, and thus fail to respond to the heavenly music. Half our mistakes come from those things which we have heard said or which we are dogmatizing about ourselves. Most of us are afraid to speak to God face to face lest we die, and so we go to Moses and the Prophets and the clergy and the sects until we get a queer jumble of messages which confuse us very much. Probably we shall have to wait till the great storm and the whirlwind are passed before we can hear the still voice in its strange contrast with the tempest. You and I may have to lie solitary and helpless in the dark and listen to it. Or we may find that painting, and music, and science, and art, and culture are all part of the heavenly music, vibrations from the divine voice. To me it has always seemed that the true baptism of the spirit is knowledge, and that if we go far enough we must find God. It is only those who

stop half-way, Agnostics, Sabellians, and Socinians, and a thousand other different sects, who take immense trouble to label themselves aright, who fail to arrive at knowledge. These are the people who speak so loudly about God that they never hear His voice.

"One almost fears to make use of the word 'law' because that word is generally used ambiguously and often injuriously. I am merely using it in the sense of that law which we believe to exist and which we believe expresses the will of God with regard to the conduct of His creatures. Can you conceive of a system without laws: can you conceive of laws without penalties? Reward is a necessity, not a gift, and penalty is a result, not a punishment. Yet we are breaking moral and physical laws every day and railing at the consequences that follow. I remember discussing this view of the case once with a man who was branded as an atheist, but whom I felt it an honour to call my friend. He said to me, 'The game of life, like every other game, must be played according to law. The player, on the other side, is hidden from us, but we know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. He is the calm, strong angel who is playing for love as we may say,' meaning that he gained nothing for himself if he won the game, 'and he would always rather that we won than lost.' Mr. Huxley never said anything truer than this. But, even so, it is not the whole truth."

Up till now the preacher had been speaking in a

voice of restraint, his words were clear and distinct, but he spoke without heat and without passion. His voice was audible, but it was the voice of an old man, giving reasons, advising, sympathising. But now a very strange thing happened, and those who were in the Cathedral that night will not readily forget it. There was a pause in the Dean's address, and all of a sudden his voice quickened. To many people his figure appeared larger, and suddenly the mantle of old age seemed to fall from him and it was Youth that spoke from the pulpit, and it was Youth that was answering the cries of youth and its inexorable demands and its unguessed despair. His shoulders straightened themselves, and his eyes, under heavy eyebrows, shone strongly, while his voice had something of the strength in it of those whose questions he had made his own.

"Admitting all this," he went on, "we still have something to ask. What of the vast record of uncomforted pain and misery in the world? What of disease and death? Of justice miscarried and unmerited calamity, and the cries that go up from empty homes and the deep-drawn gasps in the hospital wards? The horror of these things is difficult to express in words. Evil does exist, and pain and disease and suffering and unredressed wrongs and unpunished crimes exist. Pain is not altogether a matter of diseased imagination. There is suffering and there is evil in the world, and men and women recoiling from the horror of it are sending up their bitter cry to Heaven.

"Is religion to be the answer to it?

"The answer to the cry must be all-embracing, the religion of the world must include unbelievers as well as believers, it must be wide enough for the poor, but it must also be wide enough for the rich. It must include the heroes of to-day and the heroes of yesterday with a sense of triumphant recognition. If it is to include St. Francis of Assisi, the fasting saint, it must also include Van Tromp, who swept the seas and laughed! and Moses, the old Law-giver who ruled with none but God behind him, and it must include, too, the man who believes in his country, the Empire-makers who go forth to establish law and justice as they know it, and who, in spite of many mistakes, do establish it. It must include the young and the strong and the joyful as well as the old and the weak and the poor. Until it is established God's Kingdom will not have come and the fight will have to go on, and the fight, perhaps, will necessitate suffering. If it does let us meet it with courage. All the splendid virtues are dependent upon the existence of pain in the world, and humanity was not saved by those who were cured of pain. It was not saved by the faithful leper, nor by the blind man restored to sight, nor by any forgiven sufferer, nor even by Lazarus, who came back with his grave-clothes about him from the land of shadows. But it was saved by the Man who was crucified, by the Man who was lifted up, and mocked at, and was scourged, and who suffered. Numbers had come to Him as Healer and

Physician, and had been cured. But only He drew all men unto Him. He rebuked death and raised the widow's son. But He Himself went down into hell, where the small and the great are, and where those who overcome must go also. Believe me, we do not soar for our treasures; we have to dig for them in the very heart of the earth.

"We shall not work alone. There is a vast brotherhood in the world whom we need or who need us. There was One we know whose deep affection for His fellow-men saved them, and as He saved so we too must save them. There are still sinbearers in the world. We know that this is so in our daily lives; and that every true servant of God is, in some sort, a sinbearer. We look on ourselves as isolated beings, but that is not God's way of looking at us, and before we can understand this, we must cultivate the universal element in our nature. The true self is universal and not individualistic. I do not see how otherwise we can understand the Atonement, or realise what part we have in it, or why indeed it should be that because Christ died I should be forgiven. Most of us think that we bear a sufficiently heavy burden when we accept the punishment of our own sins; but that does not appear to be God's plan for us. In His big family things are not so simple nor so individual. No one who has ever set out to fight for God's cause but has been wounded in the fray, and why should it be otherwise? No one has ever even tried to be ordinarily unselfish but he or she has not had to bear the

sins of the selfish. We ask sometimes for a f vision of our Lord, longing to be nearer Him, the reply may come that in order to gain that nea view, we must be raised on a cross beside Him. I ask to do good in the world, and then complain th we have to bear the burden of the evil, and we s the innocent suffer for the guilty, and challenge t Most High for an explanation of His doings to wards us. These things will always be so, until Hi teaching is understood. While there is evil in the world the good will suffer for it, just as surely as Christ had to die on His Cross—the just for the unjust, that they may be called sons of God. But is there one, do you think, even of that careless crowd who stood on the summit of Calvary when darkness covered the earth, who, if they had un derstood, or had been able to look forward, would not have been glad to take their share of His suf fering? My friends," said the Dean, "we are to day face to face with a terrible disaster, and one that is making many thoughtful people question God's Providence. The foundering of a great ship, and the loss of many lives, have appalled us; and we must remember that it is not an isolated case, nor that it is only those who follow their lawful oc cupations on the waters who are exposed to these terrible dangers and this swift and sudden loss of life. There is still present in our minds a great colliery disaster; and although our memories are short, we cannot have forgotten three terrible earthquakes with their appalling number of victims.

We may have got accustomed to sickness and disease amongst us, but we can never accustom ourselves to these swift happenings, these terrible unpremeditated blows that stagger us by their pitiless force. And some are saying that blind fate has the control of the world. They say, as men were saying years ago, 'Were they sinners on whom the Tower of Siloam fell?' Were the good saved and the evil punished, or is it not a fact that last Sunday some men who were praying on board the ship were saved, and others were praying and were not saved? They cry out that if they must indeed believe in a Controller of the Universe there should be some reasonable justification for his actions. It is only the saints who are able to say patiently, 'Lord, how long?' Most of us want some explanation now and some answer to the problem of suffering in the world. And once more the vexed question comes to us: 'Is He just, does He care, does He indeed exist?' I think one answer, at least, comes to-day from men and women in peril on the sea. If God indeed does not care or does not exist, then this present life is the best we have and we had better cling to it. This is a perfectly justifiable and perfectly logical standpoint. How do we reconcile it with the fact that last Sunday men were laying down their lives, not for their dearest and their best only, not for their friends, but for fellow voyagers on board an ocean liner with whom, perhaps, they had never exchanged a word? How do we explain that race for death which a Highland Regi-

ment made when boys with all their lives before them leapt to be first into the horrors of the Secunderabâgh? Is heroism reasonable, can its origin be traced to anything that we know, or is heroism man's answer to the question: Does God exist? The common everyday man in the stoke-hold, or in the saloon, or playing the violin in the band answered that question. The men in the Welsh Mining Disaster answered it. The soldier who chooses death rather than dishonour answers it. John Nicholson before the gates of Delhi, Gordon at Khartoum, Jesus of Nazareth on His Cross answered it.

"But is it only on great and startling occasions that we find heroes, or do we not hear the sound of their marching all through the night? There is the courage which loves and the greater courage that is loyal when love is over; there is, too, the courage which dares to ask questions, and these, believe me, will send back the answer to many who have fallen by the way. All the suffering of the world, all the doubts and difficulties, were they magnified twice over, are worth the qualities which they produce. There is a gallant company of men and women walking the earth; men and women of courage; joyous lovers of earth; loyalists for good; courteous high-souled beautiful people; champions of clean and sane ideals; noble-hearted ones—singing as they go, undismayed and splendid: And men and women seeking to know more; men and women holding on to what they have got and determined not to lose

hold of it; men and women 'standing in the dark on the lowest stair and declaring of God, He is certainly there.' And amongst this gallant company it seems to me that I ever see a form with them like unto the Son of God.

"Nor is it only in this heroic company that I seem to see Him walking. There is, besides, a soberer pilgrimage in grey; humble folk; kind-hearted common people; tender-hearted humorists; simple men keeping their word; faithful friends with human hearts. These seldom speak of the laws of compensation, but in every act of their lives, by their human sympathy and kindness, they do compensate for the great differences in the lots of men. I find them not acquiescing in the mistakes which we are all too ready to call God's will, but holding out kind hands to the afflicted and distressed, finding a remedy for grief in sympathy, bearing all things for those weaker than themselves, hoping all things for those who seem most hopeless. Here, where self-sacrifice and high devotion are found, there is no room for doubt and uncertainty, and here as surely as in the city of Bethlehem you will find God made manifest.

"And you will find yourself raised to a higher place, a less selfish, a less self-conscious place than where you stood before, and in a larger room. The gain of the world will seem to you as nothing then, for you will know that all around you there is a vast uneconomic expenditure going on for which we can find no reason, a divine extravagance for which we

have no name, and for which there is no explanation unless Eternal Mercy and Truth exist.

"So the end of it all, so far as we know, is love. Love which bends low beneath another's burden, which bears sins and forgives them. And courage which is content to face the rough places of the road for the sake of the light at the end of the journey, aye, and to walk on very steadily towards it even when that light is invisible.

"And now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all power, might, majesty, and dominion, now, henceforth, and forever more. Amen."

THE END

THE following pages contain advertisements of a few of the Macmillan novels

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AUTHOR OF "PATSY," "THE STICKIT MINISTER," ETC.

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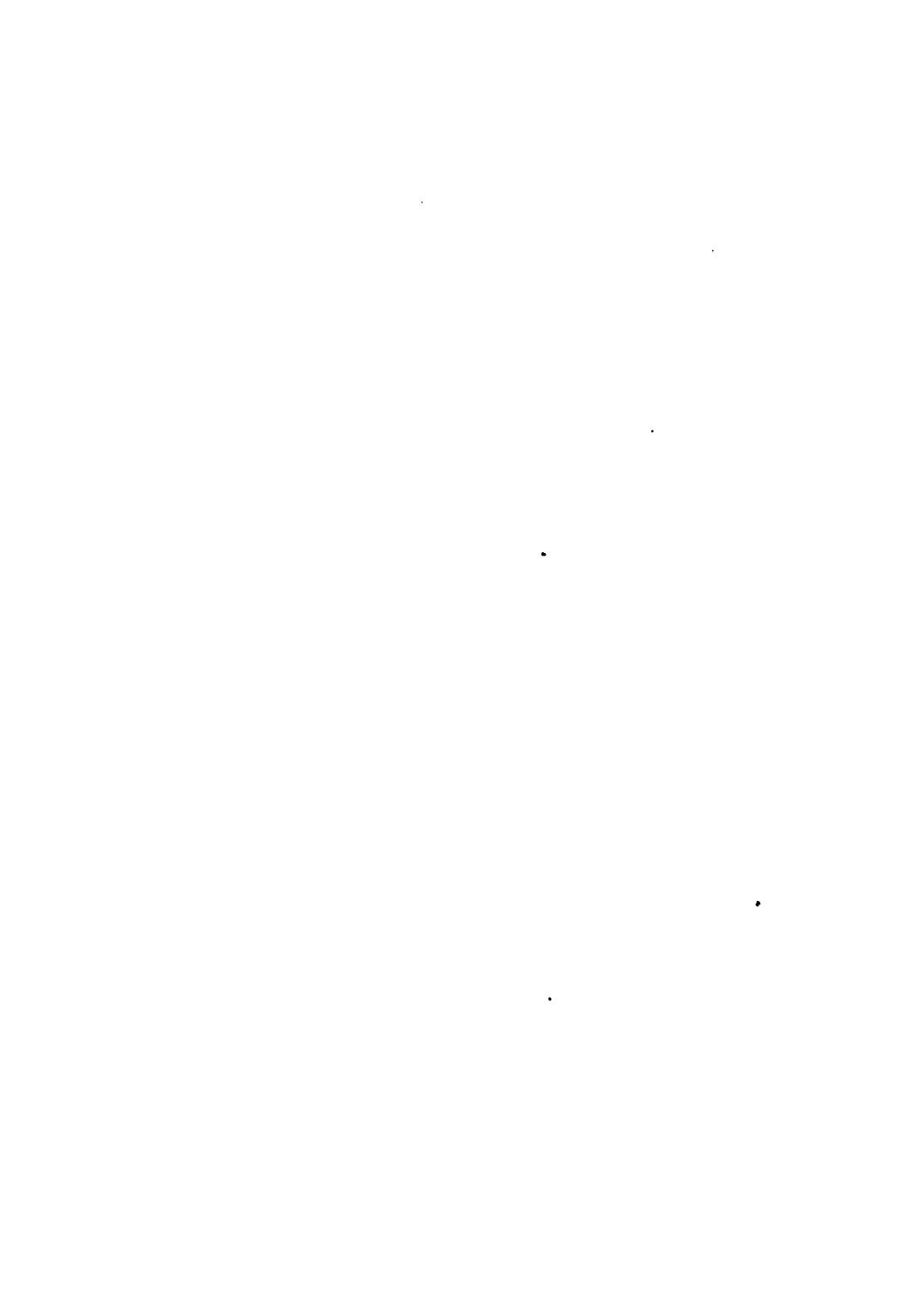
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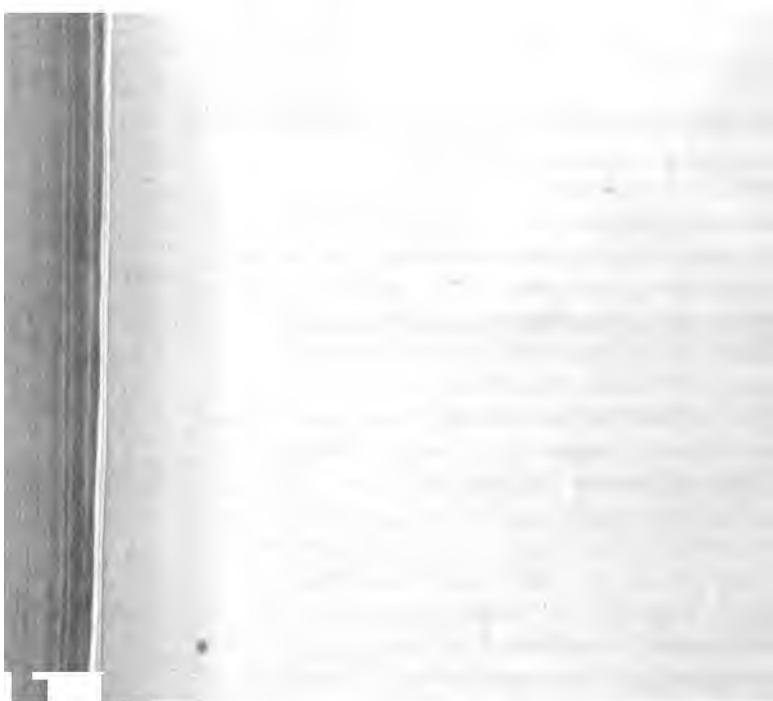
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